



# Philosophy, Politics and Economics

Solve the world's problems

'The fox knows many things, but the hedgehog knows one big thing.' For political theorist Isaiah Berlin this ancient saying illuminates two intellectual styles. Sometimes in PPE we are like hedgehogs, studying, for example, everything from purchasing to marrying to diplomacy under the model of rational choice. Just as often, though, we are like foxes, using multiple theories to understand a topic like environmental policy or military ethics.

In Philosophy, Politics and Economics (PPE) we prepare students to solve the world's problems by combining the analytical reasoning of philosophy, the social insight of political studies, and the methodological rigour of economics. Students complete a challenging course of study in logic, ethics, collective action, human behaviour, political theory, economics, and the history of ideas. Developed originally at Oxford and now available around the globe (and only at Otago in New Zealand), our programme in PPE includes a foundation in the classic texts of the human sciences, engagement with the best new ideas about society, and analysis of present-day policy challenges. Today's policy challenges are more complicated than ever, and PPE's interdisciplinary course of study prepares students to meet them.

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## Why study PPE?

Students in the Otago PPE programme complete rigorous courses of study in the three core disciplines, in addition to interdisciplinary seminars and original research.

There are natural affinities and common roots among several strands of philosophy, politics, and economics. For example, economics developed from the field of political economy, welfare economics utilises concepts of social justice from philosophy, and the philosophy of science has important implications for methodologies adopted in economics and politics.

The aim of the programme is to give a broader exposure to the range of analytical approaches in these three disciplines than would be gained within any one of the traditional single-discipline majors.

## Background required

No special background is required to begin a PPE major.

However, a student who has achieved mainly Excellences and Merits in each of the three subjects Economics, English and Mathematics with Calculus or Mathematics with Statistics at NCEA Level 3 may apply to the Department of Economics to enter the second required paper (ECON 112) without completing the first (BSNS 113).

## Career opportunities

Graduates with a PPE degree go on to apply their analytical skills in many different fields: recent graduates are working as diplomats, journalists, lawyers, project managers, academics, business executives, entrepreneurs, accountants, and policy analysts.

There are PPE graduates in entertainment, in tourism, and in information technology; those in government work at the Supreme Court and at the Ministries for the Environment, Treasury, Social Development, and Inland Revenue, among others.

You can find people with Otago PPE degrees in government, industry, academia, and civil society in New Zealand, North America, Europe, Asia, and Australia.

## Student exchange

We encourage PPE majors to participate in student exchange, and many do so. There are twelve universities that offer PPE programmes for exchange with students from Otago, as well as dozens more without formal PPE programmes that offer appropriate course work. You can participate in student exchange while moving forward with your degree and paying domestic fees.

## PPE at Otago

The PPE programme was founded in 1999 as the first and only such course of study in New Zealand, and one of only a few in Australasia. From the beginning PPE has attracted high-achieving students curious about the world and interested in employing their talents in public service.

Students begin in first year with introductory papers in economics, politics, and philosophy, but quickly progress to advanced work in small interdisciplinary seminars. Usually in the second year or the first term of third year, students may participate in student exchange.

The humanities internship practicum, in which students go out into the community to provide research services, is available for second and third year students.

Third year students may pursue supervised independent research on a topic of their choosing by taking the PHPE 301 paper.

## Degree options

You can study PPE as a:

- Bachelor of Arts (BA)
- Bachelor of Commerce (BCom)
- Bachelor of Arts and Science (BASc)
- Bachelor of Arts with Honours (BA Hons)
- Bachelor of Commerce with Honours (BCom Hons)
- And a one-year Master of Arts (MA).

The PPE major is compatible with double degrees in other subjects such as law or computer science. PPE students can complete double majors and add minor subjects as listed in the *Guide to Enrolment*.

High achieving students may apply for postgraduate study, which consists of small seminars in each of the core disciplines plus completion of a dissertation.



## PROFILE

### Blair Grant

BA(Hons) Graduate Philosophy, Politics and Economics

When Blair Grant left school he had absolutely no idea what he wanted to study.

"When I saw Philosophy, Politics and Economics (PPE) was an option for a major, it grabbed my attention straight away. It was something I was interested in, which I think makes studying infinitely easier, and it was something I thought would be pretty flexible post-uni.

"I liked how PPE makes you realise how ignorant you are. Each year you learn a little bit more and you look back on yourself a year prior and think "what an idiot". And at some point, it hits you that what you don't know absolutely dwarfs what you do, and it always will. So that's humbling but also exciting, as there's always something new to learn.

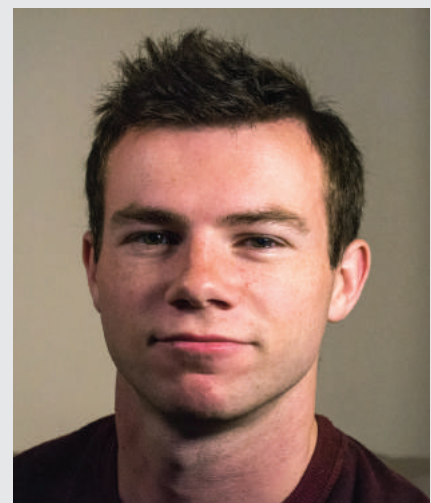
"Doing three different subjects means you can't fall into the intellectual biases of any one discipline - you're forced to be a critical thinker when the different subjects sometimes tell you different things, or at least, emphasize different aspects of the same problem.

For example, the statement "free markets are the best way to structure an economy" can be supported and attacked in different ways from the different disciplines, which means you can't just accept one perspective as correct."

Blair now works as a writer for Castleford Media, a content marketing firm.

"We create content like blog posts, e-books and infographics for companies to put on their websites; my job is to write that content. We have a wide variety of clients, so you have to be quick on your feet to get up to speed with a new subject area.

"I love writing and researching, so the best part of my job is getting paid to do those things. It's a bit like doing what I did at Otago, except the subject area is broader and the time pressure greater, which makes things exciting."



For questions about  
Philosophy, Politics  
and Economics  
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