

## The Philosophy Club: Program details

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The Philosophy Club supports collaborative philosophical inquiry for all students and teachers. We deliver:

- [Student workshop programs](#) for students in Years P – 12,
- [Teacher professional development](#) for primary and/or junior high school teachers, and/or
- [Philosopher-in-Residence programs](#).

This document supplements our 2018 brochure, and provides further information about the content of our various programs.

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## STUDENT WORKSHOP PROGRAMS

### Basic information

<b>Series format</b>	The Philosophy Club's student workshops are typically offered as <i>a series of at least five weekly sessions</i> with a given student cohort. Each session runs for about 1 – 2 hours, depending on the ages of the students involved.
<b>Group size</b>	Our workshops are designed for <i>small groups of students</i> (approx. 10 students per group – or fewer, in the case of very young students). Whole classes may be accommodated by dividing the students into smaller groups, with each small group being led by one of The Philosophy Club's expert facilitators.
<b>Outcomes</b>	Students will learn: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• how to structure their thinking well;</li><li>• how to express their thinking clearly and confidently to others;</li><li>• how to work collaboratively to address controversies and problems with open-mindedness, fair-mindedness and respect for different points of view;</li><li>• how to use evidence in an argument;</li><li>• how to question the assumptions underlying different points of view;</li><li>• how to evaluate different ideas, and discern which ideas are the most helpful or true;</li><li>• how to reflect on the quality of their own reasoning (and how to improve it).</li></ul>

## Workshops for students in Prep – Year 1

In our workshops for the very early years, students begin to explore intriguing questions through multimedia presentations, collaborative games and small-group discussion of ideas. We also start to build students' foundational thinking skills, such as giving reasons, developing criteria, drawing distinctions, and giving examples.

Sample workshop topic	Key questions	Broad philosophical themes	Workshop duration
Home Sweet Home	<p>People call all kinds of places 'home' – from slums to kings' castles, from igloos and yurts to high-rise towers and capsule hotels.</p> <p>What makes something a home?</p> <p>What would be your ideal home?</p>	Necessary and sufficient conditions	1.25 hours
Fitting In and Standing Out	<p>Why do some animals use camouflage?</p> <p>When is it good to fit in?</p> <p>Why might it sometimes be good to stand out?</p> <p>Where do humans belong? Are we part of nature, or separate from it?</p>	Identity and belonging	1.25 hours
I Hope I Will Be Good...	<p>Have you ever wanted to be good, but then been naughty anyway?</p> <p>What stops us from being good all the time?</p> <p>Do we sometimes want two different things at the same time?</p> <p>Can we control ourselves, or do we need other people to control us?</p>	Ethics	1.25 hours

## Workshops for students in Years 2 – 3

In our workshops for the early-to-middle primary years – with the help of drama games, multimedia simulations, puppets and crafts – students learn how to articulate their thoughts more clearly, and how to challenge and improve their own thinking. These valuable life skills help them develop more confidence in the validity of their beliefs, while remaining free to change their minds whenever they so choose. We continue to develop particular thinking skills in the context of group discussion.

Sample workshop topic	Key questions	Broad philosophical themes	Workshop duration
Are We Alone?	<p>What would it be like to travel to outer space?</p> <p>If a space capsule were about to launch, what would you want to put in it?</p> <p>Would it be possible to communicate with alien beings very different from ourselves?</p>	Exploration and interspecies communication	1.5 hours
Who's the Boss of Me?	<p>Are there forces that control us – and can we resist them?</p> <p>Do we each have our own destiny, or is that something we can shape through our choices?</p>	Free Will	1.5 hours
What's Really Real?	<p>How can we tell the difference between reality and imagination?</p> <p>Is it possible to know whether something is real?</p> <p>Activity: Craft your own 'cryptids', or imaginary creatures!</p>	Metaphysics	1.5 hours

## Workshops for students in Years 4 – 6

In the upper primary years, we use dynamic audio-visual materials to help students think more deeply about big questions. Students increasingly engage each other in dialogue and learn how to think *together*, by building on each other's ideas and disagreeing respectfully. We help students focus on improving the relevance of their contributions and developing greater consistency in their viewpoints. We also work on advanced thinking skills such as identifying assumptions, evaluating reasons and considering counter-examples.

Sample workshop topic	Key questions	Broad philosophical themes	Workshop duration
When Things Start to Think...	What sorts of things have minds? Can machines think and feel? Could a robot ever be a person?	Philosophy of mind	2 hours
A Charmed Life?	Can you choose to feel lucky? Would you rather live in a predictable world, or in a world of chance? What kind of world do we live in?	Luck	2 hours
My Cousin, The Ape	How did life begin? How closely related are we to other primates? Where does nature end, and culture begin?	Evolution	2 hours
Where's My Jetpack?	Can you imagine a perfect human being? Could we ever achieve a perfect world – and what would it look like? Are we headed for utopia or dystopia?	The future	2 hours

## Workshops for students in Years 7 – 9

In our junior high school workshops, students consider a variety of challenging issues across the major fields of philosophy, including ethics, epistemology, metaphysics, politics and the philosophy of language. They contend with questions that don't have clear-cut answers – only more or less convincing arguments for different conclusions. Wrestling with these sorts of questions is philosophy at its most vivid: a living, breathing practice that prompts students to refine their intuitions and worldviews. Through concept games, thought experiments, reader's theatre and discussion, students develop increasingly sophisticated thinking skills which include: testing criteria, assessing arguments, weighing up conflicting evidence and making reasoned judgements.

Sample workshop topic	Key questions	Broad philosophical themes	Workshop duration
What is Philosophy?	What is philosophy? What is a philosophical question? An illustrative metaphysics discussion.	Metaphilosophy and metaphysics	2 hours (plus short break)
Digital Technologies, Privacy and You	How do digital technologies shape our moral lives? How should we determine what constitutes a moral decision? How do our values create ethical dilemmas for us? Case study: The Edward Snowden case	Ethics and political philosophy	2 hours (plus short break)
Children's Rights	Should we lower the voting age? Starting from what age should young people be granted the various 'rights of adulthood'? Case study: The Wisconsin vs. Yoder court case concerning the Amish community's appeal to restrict school attendance for children in their community.	Ethics and political philosophy	2 hours (plus short break)
Language, Truth and Meaning	What is the relationship between words and ideas? What is language? Does language reflect the world, or does it shape it? To what extent might censorship affect our knowledge?	Philosophy of language	2 hours (plus short break)

## Workshops for students in Years 10 – 12

In our senior high school workshops, students enjoy the freedom to experiment with ideas – to propose, evaluate, reject or concede arguments as they see fit. Our original stimulus materials present complex themes in innovative ways, and generate intense and nuanced discussions. These exchanges are marked not by the urge to win a debate, but rather by the search for more rigorous arguments and deeper understanding.

Sample workshop topic	Key questions	Broad philosophical themes	Workshop duration
Who Will Watch the Watchers?	<p>Mass surveillance is ubiquitous. Should we be concerned?</p> <p>Are we giving away our personal information too freely?</p> <p>Could a convincing simulation of a person be created from data in their social media profiles?</p>	Privacy and surveillance	1.5 – 2 hours
The Power of Tastemakers	<p>Do the things you buy or consume make a statement about who you are?</p> <p>Is there anything intrinsically wrong with being a consumer?</p> <p>Can you <i>buy</i> existential fulfilment?</p> <p>Is there a contradiction between wanting to make a statement of individuality, and wanting to show that you identify with a group?</p>	Music consumerism and identity	1.5 – 2 hours
Robots and Cyborgs: The future is here	<p>What is it that makes us human?</p> <p>Could a robot be a person?</p> <p>Would you want to talk to an artificial-intelligence replica of someone you've loved and lost?</p>	Artificial intelligence	1.5 – 2 hours
Good, Better, Best: Ethical Bioenhancement	<p>Should we humans attempt to enhance our moral character, just as we enhance our ability to play sport and fight disease?</p> <p>If we could genetically engineer human embryos to create a generation of more ethical adults, should we do that?</p> <p>Who decides what 'more ethical' really means?</p>	Meta-ethics	1.5 – 2 hours

# TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

## *Introduction to Philosophical Enquiry (12-hour program)*

### Description

This program provides all the tools you need in order to start building a culture of effective critical and creative thinking at your school, using the pedagogy of collaborative philosophical enquiry.

We offer two versions of this program: one for teachers of P – Year 6, and another for teachers of Years 7 – 10.

#### *For teachers:*

We empower teachers with the knowledge, skills and understanding they need to confidently facilitate philosophical enquiry in the classroom.

#### *For school leaders:*

We offer a vision for whole-school transformation, helping you foster a thinking culture that enriches students by deepening learning, building collaboration and boosting self-efficacy.

### Outcomes

Participants learn how to identify philosophical questions, foster philosophical attitudes and foundational thinking skills, and make use of a multipurpose toolkit of reasoning and metacognitive techniques.

The program also equips participants with facilitation strategies to foster students' skill development in collaborative enquiry, conceptual exploration, dialogue and reflection.

*Introduction to Philosophical Enquiry* promotes deep understanding and provides memorable practical experiences while also presenting a wealth of useful resources to help embed philosophy as an integral and sustainable part of your school's curriculum.

### Practicalities

*Introduction to Philosophical Enquiry* runs for two full days (or equivalent) in your school's professional development time.

The program is designed for a group of 6 – 22 teachers and/or school leaders.

It typically runs on two separate days (approximately two months apart), to allow for teachers to practise new skills between the two days.

This program takes place on school premises (or at a venue organised by the school).

## Inclusions

- Stimulating, practice-focussed talks;
- Challenging interactive exercises and lively group discussions;
- The Philosophy Club’s purpose-written 115-page teacher handbook;
- Ready-to-use practical resources including a scope & sequence for the primary years, lesson planning guides, student evaluation rubrics, teacher self-evaluation forms, and a list of recommended books and resources;
- Transcripts of facilitated philosophical discussions among students for your reference;
- Information about how Philosophy integrates with the AusVELS curriculum;
- Access to The Philosophy Club’s range of (password-protected) online supplementary materials, including original materials such as our guide for working with ethical controversies in the classroom;
- Details of how our PD programs support the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers.

## Program outline

*Introduction to Philosophical Enquiry* runs over two days (or equivalent). An indicative program outline is below.

DAY 1	
Time	Activity
9:00	Introductions and agenda.
	Participate in a collaborative philosophical dialogue. (Group discussion)
	Reflections and review of what made the discussion philosophical.
	Sorting philosophical and non-philosophical questions. (Small group activity)
	Debrief / group discussion.
<b>10:30</b>	<b>Morning break</b>
10:45	Overview of the enquiry process and philosophical stimuli. (Presentation)
	Video clip of facilitation in practice.
	Facilitation principles and strategies. (Presentation)
	Transcript analysis to identify facilitation strategies used. (Pair activity)
	Introduction to a framework for philosophical enquiry: attitudes, foundational skills, argumentation skills, metacognitive skills. (Presentation)
	Attitudes for philosophical enquiry. (Interactive presentation)
<b>12:25</b>	<b>Lunch break</b>

1.10	Foundational skills for philosophical enquiry. (Interactive presentation)
	Basic argumentation skills. (Interactive presentation)
	Video clip of conceptual exploration in the classroom
	Transcript analysis to identify argumentation skills fostered. (Pair activity)
	Teaching-for-thinking strategies: basic toolkit. (Presentation)
	Choice of small group activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• applying strategies and skills to sample dialogues</li> <li>• participating in another collaborative philosophical dialogue</li> </ul>
	Debrief and wrap-up
<b>3:10</b>	<b>End of Day 1</b>

DAY 2	
Time	Activity
9:00	Welcome and agenda.
	Debrief of teachers' initial experiences of facilitating philosophical enquiry in their classrooms. (Group discussion)
	Recap of the framework for philosophical enquiry from Day 1: Attitudes, foundational skills and basic argumentation skills, followed by advanced argumentation skills (Interactive presentation).
<b>10:50</b>	<b>Morning break</b>
11:05	Audio clip and transcript analysis activity to identify and evaluate students' use of advanced argumentation skills. (Individual / pair work)
	Teachers' facilitation practice session, with feedback. (Small group collaborative philosophical enquiry)
	How children become critical thinkers. (Presentation)
	Metacognition and metacognitive skills. (Presentation)
<b>1:15</b>	<b>Lunch break</b>
2:00	Teachers' facilitation practice session, with feedback. (Small group collaborative philosophical enquiry)
	Teaching-for-thinking strategies: advanced toolkit. (Presentation)
	Short video

3:10	<p>End of presentation, followed by an opportunity for participants to browse through useful resources if they wish.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Selection of recommended books: Introductions to philosophy; purpose-written philosophical stimulus materials and discussion plans; background about philosophical enquiry with children.</li> <li>• Websites and blogs</li> <li>• Scope &amp; Sequence for Philosophy</li> <li>• Sample lesson plan</li> <li>• Student evaluation rubrics</li> <li>• Teacher self-evaluation template</li> </ul>
3:40	End of Day 2

### Testimonials

“Your workshops were hands-on and encouraged everyone to talk, share ideas and questions.”

“I feel like I will be able to improve the way I facilitate philosophical discussions by explicitly teaching the students some of the thinking tools, so that they are aware of the vocabulary and can begin to use [it] in discussion.”

“It was fantastic to see examples of what you were teaching us about through videos, audio and transcripts, just to see it in action. It made clear how capable kids are of engaging in deep philosophical thought.”

“The program has developed my ability to ask and answer higher-order questions in a range of contexts, building on other people’s ideas.”

“I’m more aware of strategies I can use to extend students’ thinking.”

“The most memorable aspect of the program was having the opportunity to join in the practice sessions. Thanks for your feedback and how you modelled running philosophy sessions.”

## Tailored professional learning services

### Coaching

We work with teachers on a one-to-one basis to help them gain confidence in facilitating philosophical enquiry, achieve their facilitation goals and overcome the particular challenges they face. We build supportive and trusting relationships with individual teachers, listening to their concerns and goals and establishing a shared vision and a shared vocabulary for collaboration. Our conversations are levers for change: we help teachers add new techniques to their repertoire and continuously improve their classroom practice. Our coaching empowers teachers to improve their own powers of observation and to reflect on their experiences in more productive ways.

### *Classroom observation and feedback*

A central pillar of our approach is to conduct classroom observation that focuses on agreed areas of skill mastery. We follow each observation session with meaningful, supportive and constructive feedback based on the observational data. Our feedback is part of an ongoing formative process that strikes a balance between reinforcing teachers' strengths and addressing areas of challenge. We empower teachers to master and fine-tune specific facilitation techniques that are known to improve student outcomes. Monthly classroom observation sessions are recommended to enable follow-through and long-term charting of progress.

### *School-wide support for collaborative professional learning*

We help to foster a school-wide culture of professional sharing, experimentation and critique that bootstraps individual teachers' skill-level in facilitating philosophical enquiry. We lay the foundations for developing cohesive, high-functioning teams that support their members through the productive sharing of experiences and expertise. We help establish collaborative modes of professional learning whereby teachers work together to set targets, track progress towards goals, refine skills and workshop new practices. By harnessing collective efforts for whole-school improvement, we help schools turn 'best practice' into common practice.

## **PHILOSOPHER-IN-RESIDENCE PROGRAM**

### **Description**

The Philosopher-in-Residence program provides a model of philosophical engagement and ongoing teacher support throughout the school term or year.

The Philosopher-in-Residence is embedded in the school on a regular basis (e.g. one day per week) and is available to deliver any of The Philosophy Club's programs and services. As appropriate, the Philosopher-in-Residence may demonstrate, facilitate or co-teach philosophy workshops in classrooms, lead a professional learning community for teachers and/or deliver tailored professional development services.

### **Outcomes**

We partner with schools to work towards the specific outcomes that school leaders and teachers are seeking.

### **Practicalities**

The specific roles of the Philosopher-in-Residence are agreed by negotiation, and activities are carried out on the school premises.