



PHIX365

Film and Philosophy

SP2 OUA 2016

Dept of Philosophy

Contents

<u>General Information</u>	2
<u>Learning Outcomes</u>	2
<u>General Assessment Information</u>	3
<u>Assessment Tasks</u>	3
<u>Delivery and Resources</u>	6
<u>Unit Schedule</u>	8
<u>Policies and Procedures</u>	9
<u>Graduate Capabilities</u>	12

Disclaimer

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General Information

Unit convenor and teaching staff

Unit Convenor

Jane Johnson

jane.johnson@mq.edu.au

By arrangement

Tutor

TBA - See iLearn for tutor details

Prerequisites

Corequisites

Co-badged status

Unit description

What can philosophy teach us about cinema? What can film show us about philosophy? Can films do philosophy? This unit explores these questions across a range of writings dealing with philosophical, aesthetic and ethical aspects of our engagement with film. We examine the ways in which film itself can explore philosophical problems in visual and narrative terms. We begin with the problems of cinematic representation, visual perception and the ontology of the moving image. We consider how film represents our subjective experience by exploring the phenomenology of perception, movement, emotional engagement and time-consciousness. We analyse how films can explore philosophical ideas, focusing on the provocative claim that films can do philosophy by cinematic means. Finally, we examine some of the ethical, moral and ideological implications of film in modern culture. Throughout the unit we analyse the work of philosophers who investigate the philosophical dimensions of film, or who construct new ways of thinking about film philosophically. We also study various films and filmmakers from a philosophical perspective with the aim of demonstrating the creative intersection between film and philosophy. All enrolment queries should be directed to Open Universities Australia (OUA): see www.open.edu.au

Important Academic Dates

Information about important academic dates including deadlines for withdrawing from units are available at <https://www.open.edu.au/student-admin-and-support/key-dates/>

Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of this unit, you will be able to:

To find, analyse and evaluate primary and secondary sources and present a well-argued

philosophical discussion in an essay format.

To interpret and examine developments in philosophy of film that deal with theoretical problems as well as broader philosophical and cultural issues.

To analyse and explore the relationship between theory and practice in contemporary cinema and its link with philosophy.

To apply philosophical theories to specific film examples.

To locate and evaluate contemporary media discussions of film from a philosophical point of view.

To create or design a means of communicating your own reflections on philosophy of film.

To participate actively in group discussion and learning activities in forums.

General Assessment Information

Assessments are to be submitted through Turnitin, and will be marked and returned via Grademark. For information about these tools, see:

http://www.mq.edu.au/iLearn/student_info/assignments.htm

For information about extensions, late penalties and special consideration, see the Policies and Procedures section below.

Assessment Tasks

Name	Weighting	Due
Film-Philosophy Exercise	15%	5pm Sunday, Wk 5
Film-Philosophy Journal	25%	5pm Sunday, Wk 12
Essay	40%	5pm Sunday, Wk 13
Participation	20%	Ongoing

Film-Philosophy Exercise

Due: **5pm Sunday, Wk 5**

Weighting: **15%**

This exercise involves writing a short discussion of a recent film (a list will be suggested) linking it to one of the ideas studied in the course. Students will be asked to explain briefly a theoretical idea or issue, and to use a contemporary film/film scene as an example of how this idea might be relevant to our philosophical understanding of the film [e.g. a student might discuss scenes from the film *The Matrix* in relation to the idea of Plato's cave or Descartes' radical scepticism.] The

writing exercise should be between 500 and 750 words in length.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- To interpret and examine developments in philosophy of film that deal with theoretical problems as well as broader philosophical and cultural issues.
- To analyse and explore the relationship between theory and practice in contemporary cinema and its link with philosophy.
- To apply philosophical theories to specific film examples.

Film-Philosophy Journal

Due: **5pm Sunday, Wk 12**

Weighting: **25%**

Students are required to submit a Film-Philosophy Journal covering weeks 2-12 of the course, with a brief entry for at least six weeks of the course (the written content of the journal should amount to approximately 1000-1500 words overall). The journal can be a workbook, scrapbook, diary, or other format of your own choosing (e.g. blog, webpage, photographs, artwork, video clip, etc). Students are asked to write their responses to the week's lecture material, readings, and tutorial discussion, and where appropriate to discuss examples of films that they have seen or discussed in class.

In the journal you may write your thoughts and impressions of the material studied from week to week, provide summaries of readings, or reflections on the topics explored that week; you include images, photographs, film reviews, and other creative works of your own relevant to film and philosophy, if you wish. Students are also encouraged to use the journal to work through ideas that will be relevant in preparing their essays.

The journal is designed to promote ongoing reading and reflection on the weekly topics explored in the lectures, in set readings, and in tutorial discussion; it also aims to encourage students to apply ideas explored in the course to contemporary cinema as well as to broader social and cultural debates.

Over the course of the semester, the journal should show evidence of:

- a) reflection on weekly readings and topics raised in tutorial discussion (study notes, questions, written comments, etc.);
- b) research into essay and tutorial topics (e.g. secondary readings, essay preparation, revision of lectures, reading, and tutorial material); and
- c) application of the theories discussed in the course to contemporary films and wider social and

cultural debates (personal reflection, critical analysis of particular films, theoretically informed use of images, and so on).

The journal is supposed to be a useful aid for ongoing study and research as well as providing an opportunity to exercise more independent, creative, and critical thinking.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- To interpret and examine developments in philosophy of film that deal with theoretical problems as well as broader philosophical and cultural issues.
- To analyse and explore the relationship between theory and practice in contemporary cinema and its link with philosophy.
- To apply philosophical theories to specific film examples.
- To locate and evaluate contemporary media discussions of film from a philosophical point of view.
- To create or design a means of communicating your own reflections on philosophy of film.

Essay

Due: **5pm Sunday, Wk 13**

Weighting: **40%**

The essay is designed to test your ability to engage with a topic in depth. Writing an essay tests your ability to express, analyse and organise key ideas clearly and systematically, and to develop an argument or point of view in a sustained and coherent manner. Essays are also the primary mode in which philosophical research is conducted; writing essays in philosophy units thus helps enhance students' abilities to analyse, interpret, and propose philosophical points of view on a variety of topics and problems.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- To find, analyse and evaluate primary and secondary sources and present a well-argued philosophical discussion in an essay format.
- To interpret and examine developments in philosophy of film that deal with theoretical problems as well as broader philosophical and cultural issues.
- To analyse and explore the relationship between theory and practice in contemporary cinema and its link with philosophy.
- To apply philosophical theories to specific film examples.

Participation

Due: **Ongoing**

Weighting: **20%**

Your online participation mark in this unit will be based on two components:

- 10% for participation (as detailed below) in the "Film Club" forum
- 10% for a general commitment to online discussion in the weekly forums

Film Club (10%)

You will find the "Film club" forum in "Essential Course Items". This is a forum for you to recommend films that illustrate some of the points discussed in the unit, or which raise philosophical issues (either through their content or through creative aspects of their construction etc) to the class.

During the unit, you will be required to post at least one film suggestion in this forum. You should (i) indicate briefly what you find philosophically interesting about this film (avoiding spoilers, if possible), and (ii) suggest a topic or question for consideration and discussion by the class members who watch the film. Please choose a film that has not been discussed in any detail in the unit content, and which has not already been suggested by another student.

You will also be required to watch at least one of the films suggested by a classmate in this forum, and post your own reflection on the film and to the questions raised by the student who recommended it, and anyone else who has responded. Please post your responses as replies in the thread initiated by the student who suggested the film.

Weekly forums (10%)

Discussion board participation represents a commitment to the academic environment necessary to any good philosophy course.

Your mark will be based on the quality of your participation. This is not just measured by the philosophical content of your posts, but by your willingness to engage in discussion with your peers. Much of what you learn in philosophy you will learn by involving yourself in discussion and argument. So while we would like to see some well thought out responses to the topics for each week and to the reading questions, we would also really encourage you to respond to the messages of other students, ask questions, post your thoughts and engage fully in the philosophical community. You'll find that if you make the most of the discussion facilities available, not only will you maximise your participation marks, but you will also get more out of the course in general.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- To participate actively in group discussion and learning activities in forums.

Delivery and Resources

Required and Recommended Texts and/or Materials

PHIX365 Film and Philosophy will be using electronically available readings, either via e-reserve at the library or via online open access websites.

The course is closely related to the following book, which is highly recommended reading:

Robert Sinnerbrink, *New Philosophies of Film: Thinking Images* (London and New York Continuum, 2011).

This book is available electronically through the Macquarie University website.

Technology Used and Required

This unit uses an ilearn website and Echo360 lecture recordings (<https://ilearn.mq.edu.au/login/MQ/>). The website contains links to lecture notes, lecture recordings, and other materials you might need for the course.

Required Reading

Essential readings for the unit, as well as some supplementary readings, can be accessed through the library e-reserve system. A list of readings for each week can be found in the weekly content blocks in iLearn.

Films

This is a course about film, and as you go through the unit a number of examples of films will be discussed, in connection with philosophical points and themes that are being explored.

Unfortunately, copyright legislation concerning the online communication of films is very restrictive, so we are unable to provide these films to you online. Some of these are likely to be films you have seen, others you may not have, but you are not expected to track them all down, and for the most part you will be able to understand and engage with the points being made without seeing the films.

There are, however, a number of films that are used as case studies which we would like you to try to view during the study period. These films have been chosen to be readily accessible, so we hope you will have no trouble finding them through a video shop (if you still have such a thing – they're becoming quite rare!), or online. They can, for example, be hired in Australia for \$4 or \$5 from iTunes or Google Play.

The films we recommend you try to watch are:

- *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly* (Week 5)
- *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (Week 10)
- *Fight Club* (Week 11)
- *The New World* (Week 12)

Please contact the unit convenor if this presents you with any difficulties.

Unit Schedule

PHIX365 Film and Philosophy

Week 1: **What is philosophy of film/film-philosophy?**

What is “philosophy of film”? Can films “philosophise”? The distinction between philosophy of film and ‘film as philosophy’ or ‘film-philosophy’.

Week 2 : **Ontologies of the Moving Image**

Andre Bazin’s ontology of the cinematographic image. Noel Carroll’s critique and alternative account. Some questions about the phenomenology of moving images and our ‘desire for reality’.

Week 3: **Understanding Film Narrative**

How and why do films makes sense? Theories of narrative and of narrative comprehension. Carroll’s ‘erotetic’ model of narrative. Critical questions from an aesthetic and phenomenological point of view.

Week 4: **Cognitivism Goes to the Movies**

The ‘cognitivist turn’ in film theory. What can cognitivist theories offer to philosophy of film? The challenge of cognitivist approaches to art cinema. Critical questions for cognitivism.

Week 5: **Affect and Emotion in Cinema**

Theories of affect and emotion in the cinema. Cognitivist and phenomenological approaches: a rapprochement? *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly* (Julian Schnabel) as case study.

Week 6 : **Cinematic Ethics**

The relationship between emotion, morality, and cinema. Moral judgment and aesthetic manipulation. Can cinema ‘do’ ethics? The problem of theorising cinematic disgust.

Week 7: **Gilles Deleuze’s Philosophy of Film**

Deleuze's theses on movement and time. The concept of the movement-image and how they are composed into a filmic whole. The breakdown of the sensory-motor action schema and the discovery of the time-image. How time-images disrupt narrative and provoke thought.

Week 8: **Stanley Cavell's Philosophy of Film**

Cavell’s analysis of the cinematic image. Film and the metaphysics of representation. What happens to human figures when projected on the screen? How to ‘read’ a film philosophically.

Week 9: **Film as Philosophy: Pro and Contra**

The ‘film as philosophy’ thesis. Livingston’s critique of the strong version; Wartenberg’s defense of a ‘moderate’ versions; Mulhall’s and Smuts’ defences of different kinds of ‘bold’ thesis. Critical questions about the relationship between philosophical theory and film criticism.

Week 10: **Film-Philosophy Case study (1): *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*** (Michel

Gondry)

Memory, morality, and self-overcoming in Michel Gondry's unorthodox love story.

Week 11: **Film-Philosophy Case Study (2): *Fight Club*** (David Fincher)

Platonic, sceptical, critical, and Nietzschean themes in David Fincher's *Fight Club*.

Week 12: **Film-Philosophy Case Study (3): *The New World*** (Terrence Malick)

Nature, culture, and the violent encounter between worlds in Terrence Malick's mythopoetic historical drama.

Policies and Procedures

Late Submission - applies unless otherwise stated elsewhere in the unit guide

Unless a Special Consideration request has been submitted and approved, (a) a penalty for lateness will apply – two (2) marks out of 100 will be deducted per day for assignments submitted after the due date – and (b) no assignment will be accepted more than seven (7) days (incl. weekends) after the original submission deadline. No late submissions will be accepted for timed assessments – e.g. quizzes, online tests.

Extension Request

Special Consideration Policy and Procedure
(<https://staff.mq.edu.au/work/strategy-planning-and-governance/university-policies-and-procedures/policies/special-consideration>)

The University recognises that students may experience events or conditions that adversely affect their academic performance. If you experience serious and unavoidable difficulties at exam time or when assessment tasks are due, you can consider applying for Special Consideration.

You need to show that the circumstances:

1. were serious, unexpected and unavoidable
2. were beyond your control
3. caused substantial disruption to your academic work
4. substantially interfered with your otherwise satisfactory fulfilment of the unit requirements
5. lasted at least three consecutive days or a total of 5 days within the teaching period and prevented completion of an assessment task scheduled for a specific date.

If you feel that your studies have been impacted submit an application as follows:

1. Visit [Ask MQ](#) and use your OneID to log in
2. Fill in your relevant details
3. Attach supporting documents by clicking 'Add a reply', click 'Browse' and navigating to the files you want to attach, then click 'Submit Form' to send your notification and supporting documents
4. Please keep copies of your original documents, as they may be requested in the future as part of the assessment process

Outcome

Once your submission is assessed, an appropriate outcome will be organised.

OUA Specific Policies and Procedures

Withdrawal from a unit after the census date

You can withdraw from your subjects prior to [the census date](#) (last day to withdraw). If you successfully withdraw before the census date, you won't need to apply for Special Circumstances. If you find yourself unable to withdraw from your subjects before the census date - you might be able to [apply for Special Circumstances](#). If you're eligible, we can refund your fees and overturn your fail grade.

If you're studying Single Subjects using FEE-HELP or paying up front, you can [apply online](#).

If you're studying a degree using HECS-HELP, you'll need to [apply directly to Macquarie University](#).

Macquarie University policies and procedures are accessible from [Policy Central](#). Students should be aware of the following policies in particular with regard to Learning and Teaching:

Academic Honesty Policy http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/academic_honesty/policy.html

New Assessment Policy in effect from Session 2 2016 http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/assessment/policy_2016.html. For more information visit http://students.mq.edu.au/events/2016/07/19/new_assessment_policy_in_place_from_session_2/

Assessment Policy prior to Session 2 2016 <http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/assessment/policy.html>

Grading Policy prior to Session 2 2016 <http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/grading/policy.html>

Grade Appeal Policy <http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/gradeappeal/policy.html>

Complaint Management Procedure for Students and Members of the Public http://www.mq.edu.au/policy/docs/complaint_management/procedure.html

Disruption to Studies Policy http://www.mq.edu.au/policy/docs/disruption_studies/policy.html *The*

Disruption to Studies Policy is effective from March 3 2014 and replaces the Special Consideration Policy.

In addition, a number of other policies can be found in the [Learning and Teaching Category](#) of Policy Central.

Student Code of Conduct

Macquarie University students have a responsibility to be familiar with the Student Code of Conduct: https://students.mq.edu.au/support/student_conduct/

Results

Results shown in *iLearn*, or released directly by your Unit Convenor, are not confirmed as they are subject to final approval by the University. Once approved, final results will be sent to your student email address and will be made available in [eStudent](#). For more information visit ask.mq.edu.au.

Student Support

Macquarie University provides a range of support services for students. For details, visit <http://students.mq.edu.au/support/>

Learning Skills

Learning Skills (mq.edu.au/learningskills) provides academic writing resources and study strategies to improve your marks and take control of your study.

- [Workshops](#)
- [StudyWise](#)
- [Academic Integrity Module for Students](#)
- [Ask a Learning Adviser](#)

Student Services and Support

Students with a disability are encouraged to contact the [Disability Service](#) who can provide appropriate help with any issues that arise during their studies.

Student Enquiries

For all student enquiries, visit Student Connect at ask.mq.edu.au

IT Help

For help with University computer systems and technology, visit http://www.mq.edu.au/about_us/offices_and_units/information_technology/help/.

When using the University's IT, you must adhere to the [Acceptable Use of IT Resources Policy](#). The policy applies to all who connect to the MQ network including students.

Graduate Capabilities

Creative and Innovative

Our graduates will also be capable of creative thinking and of creating knowledge. They will be imaginative and open to experience and capable of innovation at work and in the community. We want them to be engaged in applying their critical, creative thinking.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- To find, analyse and evaluate primary and secondary sources and present a well-argued philosophical discussion in an essay format.
- To interpret and examine developments in philosophy of film that deal with theoretical problems as well as broader philosophical and cultural issues.
- To analyse and explore the relationship between theory and practice in contemporary cinema and its link with philosophy.
- To apply philosophical theories to specific film examples.
- To locate and evaluate contemporary media discussions of film from a philosophical point of view.
- To create or design a means of communicating your own reflections on philosophy of film.
- To participate actively in group discussion and learning activities in forums.

Assessment tasks

- Film-Philosophy Exercise
- Film-Philosophy Journal
- Essay
- Participation

Capable of Professional and Personal Judgement and Initiative

We want our graduates to have emotional intelligence and sound interpersonal skills and to demonstrate discernment and common sense in their professional and personal judgement. They will exercise initiative as needed. They will be capable of risk assessment, and be able to handle ambiguity and complexity, enabling them to be adaptable in diverse and changing environments.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- To find, analyse and evaluate primary and secondary sources and present a well-argued

philosophical discussion in an essay format.

- To interpret and examine developments in philosophy of film that deal with theoretical problems as well as broader philosophical and cultural issues.
- To analyse and explore the relationship between theory and practice in contemporary cinema and its link with philosophy.
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Assessment tasks

- Film-Philosophy Exercise
- Film-Philosophy Journal
- Essay
- Participation

Commitment to Continuous Learning

Our graduates will have enquiring minds and a literate curiosity which will lead them to pursue knowledge for its own sake. They will continue to pursue learning in their careers and as they participate in the world. They will be capable of reflecting on their experiences and relationships with others and the environment, learning from them, and growing - personally, professionally and socially.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- To find, analyse and evaluate primary and secondary sources and present a well-argued philosophical discussion in an essay format.
- To interpret and examine developments in philosophy of film that deal with theoretical problems as well as broader philosophical and cultural issues.
- To analyse and explore the relationship between theory and practice in contemporary cinema and its link with philosophy.
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- To create or design a means of communicating your own reflections on philosophy of film.

- To participate actively in group discussion and learning activities in forums.

Assessment tasks

- Film-Philosophy Exercise
- Film-Philosophy Journal
- Essay
- Participation

Discipline Specific Knowledge and Skills

Our graduates will take with them the intellectual development, depth and breadth of knowledge, scholarly understanding, and specific subject content in their chosen fields to make them competent and confident in their subject or profession. They will be able to demonstrate, where relevant, professional technical competence and meet professional standards. They will be able to articulate the structure of knowledge of their discipline, be able to adapt discipline-specific knowledge to novel situations, and be able to contribute from their discipline to inter-disciplinary solutions to problems.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- To find, analyse and evaluate primary and secondary sources and present a well-argued philosophical discussion in an essay format.
- To interpret and examine developments in philosophy of film that deal with theoretical problems as well as broader philosophical and cultural issues.
- To analyse and explore the relationship between theory and practice in contemporary cinema and its link with philosophy.
- To apply philosophical theories to specific film examples.
- To locate and evaluate contemporary media discussions of film from a philosophical point of view.
- To create or design a means of communicating your own reflections on philosophy of film.
- To participate actively in group discussion and learning activities in forums.

Assessment tasks

- Film-Philosophy Exercise
- Film-Philosophy Journal
- Essay

Critical, Analytical and Integrative Thinking

We want our graduates to be capable of reasoning, questioning and analysing, and to integrate

and synthesise learning and knowledge from a range of sources and environments; to be able to critique constraints, assumptions and limitations; to be able to think independently and systemically in relation to scholarly activity, in the workplace, and in the world. We want them to have a level of scientific and information technology literacy.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- To find, analyse and evaluate primary and secondary sources and present a well-argued philosophical discussion in an essay format.
- To interpret and examine developments in philosophy of film that deal with theoretical problems as well as broader philosophical and cultural issues.
- To analyse and explore the relationship between theory and practice in contemporary cinema and its link with philosophy.
- To apply philosophical theories to specific film examples.
- To locate and evaluate contemporary media discussions of film from a philosophical point of view.
- To create or design a means of communicating your own reflections on philosophy of film.
- To participate actively in group discussion and learning activities in forums.

Assessment tasks

- Film-Philosophy Exercise
- Film-Philosophy Journal
- Essay
- Participation

Problem Solving and Research Capability

Our graduates should be capable of researching; of analysing, and interpreting and assessing data and information in various forms; of drawing connections across fields of knowledge; and they should be able to relate their knowledge to complex situations at work or in the world, in order to diagnose and solve problems. We want them to have the confidence to take the initiative in doing so, within an awareness of their own limitations.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- To find, analyse and evaluate primary and secondary sources and present a well-argued philosophical discussion in an essay format.
- To interpret and examine developments in philosophy of film that deal with theoretical problems as well as broader philosophical and cultural issues.

- To analyse and explore the relationship between theory and practice in contemporary cinema and its link with philosophy.
- To apply philosophical theories to specific film examples.
- To locate and evaluate contemporary media discussions of film from a philosophical point of view.
- To create or design a means of communicating your own reflections on philosophy of film.
- To participate actively in group discussion and learning activities in forums.

Assessment tasks

- Film-Philosophy Exercise
- Film-Philosophy Journal
- Essay

Effective Communication

We want to develop in our students the ability to communicate and convey their views in forms effective with different audiences. We want our graduates to take with them the capability to read, listen, question, gather and evaluate information resources in a variety of formats, assess, write clearly, speak effectively, and to use visual communication and communication technologies as appropriate.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- To find, analyse and evaluate primary and secondary sources and present a well-argued philosophical discussion in an essay format.
- To interpret and examine developments in philosophy of film that deal with theoretical problems as well as broader philosophical and cultural issues.
- To analyse and explore the relationship between theory and practice in contemporary cinema and its link with philosophy.
- To apply philosophical theories to specific film examples.
- To locate and evaluate contemporary media discussions of film from a philosophical point of view.
- To create or design a means of communicating your own reflections on philosophy of film.
- To participate actively in group discussion and learning activities in forums.

Assessment tasks

- Film-Philosophy Exercise

- Film-Philosophy Journal
- Essay
- Participation

Engaged and Ethical Local and Global citizens

As local citizens our graduates will be aware of indigenous perspectives and of the nation's historical context. They will be engaged with the challenges of contemporary society and with knowledge and ideas. We want our graduates to have respect for diversity, to be open-minded, sensitive to others and inclusive, and to be open to other cultures and perspectives: they should have a level of cultural literacy. Our graduates should be aware of disadvantage and social justice, and be willing to participate to help create a wiser and better society.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- To interpret and examine developments in philosophy of film that deal with theoretical problems as well as broader philosophical and cultural issues.
- To locate and evaluate contemporary media discussions of film from a philosophical point of view.
- To create or design a means of communicating your own reflections on philosophy of film.
- To participate actively in group discussion and learning activities in forums.

Assessment tasks

- Film-Philosophy Journal
- Participation

Socially and Environmentally Active and Responsible

We want our graduates to be aware of and have respect for self and others; to be able to work with others as a leader and a team player; to have a sense of connectedness with others and country; and to have a sense of mutual obligation. Our graduates should be informed and active participants in moving society towards sustainability.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcome

- To participate actively in group discussion and learning activities in forums.

Assessment task

- Participation