

Programme Specification

1	Awarding body	University of London				
2	Teaching Institution	Birkbeck College				
3	Programme Title(s)	MA Philosophy				
4	Programme Code(s)	TMAPLPHY_C				
5	UCAS code	N/A				
6	Home Department	Philosophy				
7	Exit Award(s)	PG Diploma, PG Certificate				
8	Duration of Study (number of years)	1 year FT; 2 years PT				
9	Mode of Study	FT	X	PT	X	DL
10	Level of Award (FHEQ)	7				
11	Other teaching depts or institution	N/A				
12	Professional, Statutory Regulatory Body(PSRB) details	N/A				
13	QAA Benchmark Group	N/A				

14	Programme Rationale & Aims
	<p>This programme provides students with a structured Masters programme in central areas of philosophy. It provides a framework within which preparation for doctoral study can be undertaken, for those who wish to progress to a research degree, but is focussed particularly on provision of a rich and varied experience of studying philosophy at Masters level. Teaching is research-led, delivered by core staff.</p>

15	Entry Criteria
	<p>An upper second-class honours degree (or its equivalent) is expected. The degree need not be in philosophy (see below). Admission decisions are made on the basis of (a) academic references; (b) a writing sample; and (c) an interview (by telephone for overseas candidates).</p>

16	Learning Outcomes
	<p>Subject Specific:</p> <p><i>Students will have:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A detailed grasp of a variety of historical and current philosophical debates across more than one philosophical subject area; 2. A critical command of philosophical concepts and distinctions; 3. An ability to read closely and understand key philosophical texts; 4. An ability to formulate philosophical questions with precision and clarity; 5. An ability to summarise philosophical arguments and positions;

	<p>6. An ability to support and challenge philosophical views by constructing arguments and citing relevant considerations;</p> <p>7. An awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of opposing views, and an ability to formulate the best arguments for those views;</p> <p>8. Developed abilities in writing, reading and discussing philosophy, attained through a wide variety of learning experiences.</p> <p>Intellectual:</p> <p><i>Students will have:</i></p> <p>9. The ability to assess the strengths and weaknesses of a thinker’s position;</p> <p>10. The ability to formulate their thoughts concisely with clarity and precision;</p> <p>11. The ability to form, analyse and criticize arguments cogently.</p> <p>Practical:</p> <p><i>Students will have:</i></p> <p>12. The ability to draw information from the presentation of complex material;</p> <p>13. The ability to summarise key points from presented material;</p> <p>14. The ability to analyse complex thought and argument;</p> <p>15. The ability to draw information together in what they write;</p> <p>16. The ability to articulate and evaluate the specific questions underlying a more general question;</p> <p>17. The ability to present well-structured thought orally;</p> <p>18. The ability to construct cogent arguments in the course of discussion;</p> <p>19. The ability to use libraries and, where they have facilities, electronic sources of information;</p> <p>20. The ability to assess the validity of arguments.</p> <p>Personal and Social:</p> <p><i>Students will have:</i></p> <p>21. The ability to form their own philosophical views, argue for those views, and be prepared to defend or amend them in the light of criticism;</p> <p>22. The ability to read philosophy independently;</p> <p>23. The ability to formulate one’s thoughts clearly and concisely;</p> <p>24. A developed capacity for independent thought.</p>
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17	<p>Learning, teaching and assessment methods</p> <p>Learning and Teaching on the MA consists in a combination of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lectures and Seminars • Individual Supervision • Class Discussion and Student Presentations • Independent Reading • Essay Writing
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	<p>Assessment is predominantly by submitted essays on set topics (though see below for exceptions.) The marking scheme for each module, and for the MA as a whole, is: Fail (49 and below); Pass (50-59); Merit (60-69); Distinction (70 and above).</p> <p>More specifically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Each of our <i>optional</i> modules consists of ten lectures, each followed by a seminar, with set readings to be completed before each session. All optional modules are assessed by submitted essays. Optional modules are taught in all three terms. — <i>Philosophy Proseminar</i>, which is a compulsory module for MA students who already have a first degree in philosophy, consists of ten intensive seminar sessions focused on the close reading of philosophical texts. Assessment is based on participation and on student presentations, which must subsequently be written up and submitted. Note: marks received on this module do not affect students' overall class marks (although the module must be passed). — <i>Introduction to Philosophy</i>, which is a compulsory module for MA students who do not have a first degree in philosophy, consists of twenty lectures, each followed by a seminar. It meets twice a week in the Autumn Term. Assessment is by an essay (worth 50% of the module mark) and a take-home, short-answer exam (worth 50%). The exam is due the week after term ends; the essay is due at the start of Term 2. Students can write a formative (practice) essay during the term, on which they receive written feedback. — <i>Introduction to Philosophical Argument</i>, which is also compulsory for MA students without first degrees in philosophy, consists of ten lectures and ten classes. It meets once a week in the Spring Term. It is assessed by a written exam which takes place in-college after term ends. Note: marks received on this module do not affect students' overall class marks (although the module must be passed). — For the <i>Dissertation</i>, students receive <i>four</i> one-on-one meetings with their supervisors: one initial consultation to establish a topic, plus three supervisions. Dissertations are due at the start of September.
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18	<p>Programme Description</p> <p>There are two routes through this programme: one for students with a first degree in philosophy, and one for students without ('conversion' students). In addition, the programme may be studied part-time or full-time.</p> <p>Programme Description – Route 1 (for students with a first degree in Philosophy):</p> <p><i>Full-time</i> Students take any <i>six</i> optional modules across the three terms, with a maximum of three optional modules in each of Autumn and Spring terms, and a maximum of two optional modules in Summer term; they also take <i>Philosophical Proseminar</i>, and write a Dissertation.</p> <p><i>Part-time</i> Year 1: Students take any <i>four</i> optional modules across the three terms, with a maximum of three in any one term, and make a start on their Dissertations. Year 2: Students take any <i>two</i> optional modules across the three terms; they also take <i>Philosophical Research Methods</i>, and complete their Dissertations.</p>
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Programme Description – Route 2 (for students without a first degree in Philosophy):

Full-time

In the Autumn Term students take *Introduction to Philosophy* (which meets twice per week). In the Spring Term students take *Introduction to Philosophical Argument*. They take any *four* optional modules across the three terms, with a maximum of two in any one term. Students also write a Dissertation.

Part-time

Year 1: Students take *Introduction to Philosophy* in the Autumn Term, *Introduction to Philosophical Argument* in the Spring Term, plus one or two optional modules across the Spring and Summer Terms (toward a total of four in the two years). Students make a start on their Dissertations.

Year 2: Students take two or three optional modules across the three terms (to complete the total of four), with a maximum of two optional modules in the third term. Students also complete their Dissertations.

The following is a representative list of optional modules (please note that not all modules are taught every year, and that the list is subject to change):

- Ancient Philosophy
- Aristotle's Biology
- Art and Value
- Biology of Evil
- Early Modern Philosophy of Mind
- Epistemology
- Evolution and Philosophy
- Ethics
- Idea of Freedom
- Kant and German Idealism
- Metaethics
- Metaphysics
- Philosophy of Mind
- Morality, Nature and Evolution
- Modern Philosophy
- Moral Responsibility
- Nietzsche
- Philosophy, Business and Society
- Philosophy and Gender
- Rationality: Formal and Theoretical Approaches
- Political Philosophy
- Power of Art: Historical Themes
- Philosophy of Science
- Social Epistemology
- Spinoza

19	Programme Structure – Route 1 (for students with a first degree in Philosophy)			
Full-Time programme – 1 year				
Year 1				
Level	Module Code	Module Title	Credits	Status*
7	SSPL160S7	Philosophical Proseminar	30	Compulsory
7		Option 1	15	Optional
7		Option 2	15	Optional
7		Option 3	15	Optional
7		Option 4	15	Optional
7		Option 5	15	Optional
7		Option 6	15	Optional
7	SSPL025D7	Dissertation, MA Philosophy	60	Core
Part-Time programme – 2 years				
Year 1				
Level	Module Code	Module Title	Credits	Status
7		Option 1	15	Optional
7		Option 2	15	Optional
7		Option 3	15	Optional
7		Option 4	15	Optional
Year 2				
7	SSPL160S7	Philosophy Proseminar	30	Compulsory
7		Option 5	15	Optional
7		Option 6	15	Optional
7	SSPL025D7	Dissertation, MA Philosophy	60	Core
Programme Structure – Route 2 (for students without a first degree in Philosophy)				
Full-Time programme – 1 year				
Year 1				
Level	Module Code	Module Title	Credits	Status*
7	SSPL074S7	Introduction to Philosophy	30	Compulsory
6	SSPL076S6	Introduction to Philosophical Argument	30	Compulsory
7		Option 1	15	Optional
7		Option 2	15	Optional
7		Option 3	15	Optional
7		Option 4	15	Optional
7	SSPL025D7	Dissertation, MA Philosophy	60	Core

Year of entry: 2021/22



Part-Time programme – 2 years				
Year 1				
Level	Module Code	Module Title	Credits	Status*
7	SSPL074S7	Introduction to Philosophy	30	Compulsory
6	SSPL076S6	Introduction to Philosophical Argument	30	Compulsory
7		Option 1	15	Optional
(7)		(Option 2 – this year or next)	(15)	(Optional)
Year 2				
(7)		(Option 2 – if not taken in Year 1)	(15)	(Optional)
7		Option 3	15	Optional
7		Option 4	15	Optional
7	SSPL025D7	Dissertation, MA Philosophy	60	Core

Status*

CORE – Module must be taken and passed by student; COMPULSORY – Module must be taken, mark can be reviewed at sub-exam board; OPTIONAL – Student can choose to take this module

20	Programme Director	Dr Sarah Patterson
21	Start Date (<i>term/year</i>)	Prior to 2008/9
22	Date approved by TQEC	Prior to 2008/9
23	Date approved by Academic Board	Prior to 2008/9
24	Date(s) updated/amended	Feb 2020 for 2020/21