

PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION

Name, title and level of final qualification(s)	MA Philosophy (Level 7)
Name and title of any exit qualification(s)	PG Certificate in Philosophy PG Diploma in Philosophy
Awarding Body	University of London
Teaching Institution(s)	Birkbeck, University of London
Home school/other teaching departments	School of Historical Studies
Location of delivery	Central London
Language of delivery and assessment	English
Mode of study, length of study and normal start month	Full-time (1 year) Part-time (2 years) September
Professional, statutory or regulatory body	Not applicable
QAA subject benchmark group(s) Higher Education Credit Framework for England	N/A
UCAS code and URL	N/A
Birkbeck Course Code	TMAPLPIP_C
HECoS Code	100337
Start date of programme	Prior to 2008-09
Date of programme approval	Prior to 2008-09
Date of last programme amendment approval	April 2023
Valid for academic entry year	2024-25
Programme Director	Sarah Patterson
Date of last revision to document	01/02/2024

Admissions requirements

At least a second-class honours degree (2:2), or equivalent, not necessarily in philosophy.

We welcome applicants without traditional entry qualifications as we base decisions on our own assessment of qualifications, knowledge and previous work experience. We may waive formal entry requirements based on judgement of academic potential.

On your application form, please list all your relevant qualifications and experience, including those you expect to achieve.

Course aims

- The MA Philosophy programme at Birkbeck offers students postgraduate teaching in central aspects of Western philosophy and its history in a uniquely collaborative and supportive programme with some of the country's leading researchers.
- The course has two routes. The non-conversion route is suited for students who have a first degree in philosophy and wish to progress to more advanced levels of study, while the conversion route is for those without undergraduate training in philosophy who want to develop their intellectual curiosity, independent thinking and capacity to engage critically with significant ideas.
- Students will receive a broad and thorough grounding in central areas of philosophy, while having the chance to study advanced topics with specialists in the areas that they find most interesting. Students without a first degree in philosophy will take a special route through the course.

Course structure

There are two routes through this programme: one for students with a first degree in philosophy, one for students without ('conversion' students). In addition, the programme may be studied part-time or full-time, and with an October or a January start.

Non-conversion route (for students with a first degree in Philosophy)

Full-time

Students take 120 credits worth of optional modules across the three terms, and a Dissertation, with a maximum of 60 credits in taught options modules taken per term.

Part-time

Year 1: Students take 60 credits worth of optional modules across the three terms (with a maximum of 30 credits in taught modules per term), and make a start on their Dissertations.

Year 2: Students take 60 credits worth of optional modules across the three terms (with a maximum of 30 credits in taught modules per term), and complete their Dissertations.

Conversion route 2 (for students without a first degree in Philosophy)

Full-time:

In the Autumn Term students take Introduction to Philosophy, which consists in 20 pre-recorded lectures and small-group tutorials. They take 90 credits worth of optional modules, with a maximum of three per term. Students also write a Dissertation.

Part-time:

Year 1: Students take Introduction to Philosophy in the Autumn Term, which consists in 20 pre-recorded lectures and small-group tutorials. They take 90 credits worth of optional modules over the course of the two years, with a maximum of three per term. Students make a start on their Dissertations.

Year 2: Students take the remaining credits of optional modules, out of a total of 90 over the course of two years, with a maximum of three per term. Students also complete their Dissertations.

For students on the conversion route starting in January, skills sessions from Introduction to Philosophy are offered in their first term (Spring), and they then take Introduction to Philosophy in the Autumn term as a survey module.

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

Level	Module Code	Module Title	Credit	Comp Core/ Option	Likely teaching term(s)
CONVERSION PROGRAMME					
Full-time – 1 year					
7	SSPL074S7	Introduction to Philosophy	30	Comp	T1
7		Option 1 (may be L6 Logic)	30	Option	T1-3
7		Option 2	30	Option	T1-3
7		Option 3	30	Option	T1-3
7	SSPL025D7	Dissertation	60	Comp	T1-3
Part-time – 2 years					
7	SSPL074S7	Introduction to Philosophy	30	Comp	T1
7	Year 1	Option 1 (may be L6 Logic)	30	Option	T1-3
7	Year 1/2	Option 2	30	Option	T1-3
7	Year 2	Option 3	30	Option	T1-3
7	SSPL025D7	Dissertation	60	Comp	T1-3
NON-CONVERSION PROGRAMME					
Full-time – 1 year					
7		Option 1 (may be L6 Logic)	30	Option	T1-3
7		Option 2	30	Option	T1-3
7		Option 3	30	Option	T1-3
7		Option 4	30	Option	T1-3
7	SSPL025D7	Dissertation	60	Comp	T1-3
Part-time – 2 years					
7	Year 1	Option 1 (may be L6 Logic)	30	Option	T1-3
7	Year 1	Option 2	30	Option	T1-3
7	Year 1/2	Option 3	30	Option	T1-3
7	Year 2	Option 4	30	Option	T1-3
7	SSPL025D7	Dissertation	60	Comp	T1-3
Indicative list of option modules					
L7	SSPL243S7	Contemporary Epistemology			30
L7	SSPL243S7	Philosophy of Mind and Cognitive Science			30
L7	SSPL246S7	Ethical Traditions			30
L7	SSPL249S7	Evolution, Science and Morality			30
L7	SSPL252S7	Free Will and Moral Responsibility			30
L7	SSPL255S7	Language and Metaphysics			30
L7	SSPL258S7	Metaphysical Traditions, Ancient and Modern			30
L7	SSPL261S7	Philosophy, Art and Literature			30
L7	SSPL264S7	The Ethics of Life and Death: Humans, Animals and the Environment			30

L7	SSPL267S7	Themes in Twentieth-Century French and German Philosophy	30
L7	SSPL270S7	Theories of Value: Aesthetics and Ethics	30
L7	SSPL273S7	Topics in Early Modern Philosophy	30
L7	SSPL276S7	Women in Philosophy	30
L7	SSPL278H7	Special Topics I	15
L7	SSPL280H7	Special Topics II	15
L7	SSPL171S7	Ancient and Medieval Philosophy	30
L7	SSPL151S7	The Biology of Evil	30
L7	SSPL109S7	Philosophy of Science	30
L7	SSPL106S7	Philosophy, Business and Society	30
L7	SSPL004S7	Political Philosophy	30
L7	SSPL112S7	The Idea of Freedom	30
L7	SSPL114S7	The Philosophy of Nietzsche	30

Note: options are taken subject to a maximum of 60 taught credits a term for full-time students and 30 credits per term for part-time students.

Core: Module must be taken and passed by student

Compulsory: Module must be taken but can be considered for compensated credit (see CAS regulations paragraph 24)

Option: Student can choose to take this module

How you will learn

Your learning and teaching are organised to help you meet the learning outcomes (below) of the course. As a student, we expect you to be an active learner and to take responsibility for your learning, engaging with all of the material and sessions arranged for you.

Each course is divided into modules. You will find information on the virtual learning site (Moodle, see Academic Support below) about each of your modules, what to expect, the work you need to prepare, links to reading lists and readings, and information about how and when you will be assessed.

Teaching on this course is a combination of in-person lectures and seminars. Lectures are designed to provide you with an outline or overview of the topic, to engage you with the material and direct you to other resources. They include interaction with the lecturer and are a springboard for your own learning. Seminars are group sessions where you will be asked to contribute to discussion around the topic, with material set in advance for which you need to prepare. In addition to attending lectures and seminars, you will engage in substantial independent learning during this course, including reading texts in philosophy; answering questions about the texts in preparation for participation in classes; watching/listening to audio-visual resources; completing assessments.

Each of our optional modules consists of ten lectures, each followed by a seminar, with set readings to be completed before each session. Optional modules are taught in all three terms.

Introduction to Philosophy, which is a compulsory module for MA students who do not have a first degree in philosophy, consists of twenty lectures and seminars in the Autumn term, offered back-to-back on one evening per week for 10 weeks. The module is offered in T1, but for January starters, the skills components of that module are offered in T2 (i.e., their first term). For the *Dissertation*, students receive four 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 (or January for January starters).

How we will assess you

The course will use a variety of assessment methods. Assessment is used to enhance your learning rather than simply to test it. For most of the modules associated with this course, your assessment will be through essays, which will develop in length and expected complexity as you progress. Some modules may have short writing assignments, short-answer exams (completed at home) or sets of problems to solve.

Learning outcomes (what you can expect to achieve)

'Learning outcomes' indicate what you should be able to know or do at the end of your course. Providing them helps you to understand what your teachers will expect and also the learning requirements upon which you will be assessed.

At the end of this course, you should be able to:

- Demonstrate a deep and systematic understanding of central areas of philosophy, including historical and contemporary debates, and the interrelations between different areas of philosophy
- Display a thorough understanding of different ideas, contexts and frameworks deployed by philosophers; their strengths and weaknesses; and the ways in which they affect the shape of philosophical arguments
- Develop critical responses to different philosophical arguments and theories, while suggesting new concepts or approaches
- Flexibly and creatively apply knowledge to critically challenge philosophical responses to key arguments, while situating these in relation to different theories and methodologies in philosophy
- Understand and communicate complex ideas and information at a high level of abstraction while demonstrating an in-depth grasp of a range of sources
- Construct detailed, complex arguments for thought-out positions which appropriately deploy advanced philosophical methodologies
- Demonstrate a capacity for original and independent thought while developing the capability to effectively communicate in a range of complex and specialised contexts
- Autonomously implement and evaluate improvements to performance, taking into account reflection, feedback and philosophical best practice

Careers and further study

Graduates can pursue career paths in education, research, politics and journalism. Possible professions include:

- Higher education
- Civil service
- Local government officer
- Journalist
- Business and finance
- Social work
- Marketing and advertising

In fact, a philosophy degree from Birkbeck will provide skills that are attractive to employers in wide range of professions, in particular:

- Research skills
- Critical thinking skills
- High-level oral and written communication skills in English
- The ability to evaluate different types of evidence and information
- Presentation skills
- The ability to persuade with cogent arguments

See the [British Philosophical Association Careers and Employability web page](#) for more information.

Birkbeck offers a range of careers support to its students. You can find out more on the [careers pages of our website](#).

Academic regulations and course management

Birkbeck's academic regulations are contained in its [Common Award Scheme Regulations](#) and Policies published by year of application on the Birkbeck website.

You will have access to a course handbook on Moodle and this will outline how your course is managed, including who to contact if you have any questions about your module or course.

Support for your study

Your learning at Birkbeck is supported by your teaching team and other resources and people in the College there to help you with your study. Birkbeck uses a virtual learning environment called Moodle and each course has a dedicated Moodle page and there are further Moodle sites for each of your modules. This will include your course handbook.

Birkbeck will introduce you to the Library and IT support, how to access materials online, including using Moodle, and provide you with an orientation which includes an online Moodle module to guide you through all of the support available. You will also be allocated a personal tutor and provided with information about learning support offered within your School and by the College.

[Please check our website for more information about student support services](#). This covers the whole of your time as a student with us including learning support and support for your wellbeing.

Quality and standards at Birkbeck

Birkbeck's courses are subject to our quality assurance procedures. This means that new courses must follow our design principles and meet the requirements of our academic regulations. Each new course or module is subject to a course approval process where the proposal is scrutinised by subject specialists, quality professionals and external representatives to ensure that it will offer an excellent student experience and meet the expectation of regulatory and other professional bodies.

You will be invited to participate in an online survey for each module you take. We take these surveys seriously and they are considered by the course team to develop both modules and the overall courses. Please take the time to complete any surveys you are sent as a student.

We conduct an annual process of reviewing our portfolio of courses which analyses student achievement, equality data and includes an action plan for each department to identify ongoing enhancements to our education, including changes made as a result of student feedback. Our periodic review process is a regular check (usually every four years) on the courses by department with a specialist team including students.

Each course will have an external examiner associated with it who produces an annual report and any recommendations. Students can read the most recent external examiner reports on the course Moodle pages. Our courses are all subject to Birkbeck Baseline Standards for our Moodle module information. This supports the accessibility of our education including expectations of what information is provided online for students.

The information in this programme specification has been approved by the College's Academic Board and every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information it contains.

Programme specifications are reviewed periodically. If any changes are made to courses, including core and/or compulsory modules, the relevant department is required to provide a revised programme specification. Students will be notified of any changes via Moodle.

Further information about specifications and an archive of programme specifications for the College's courses is [available online](#).

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