

University of Cambridge: Programme Specifications

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PHILOSOPHY TRIPOS

1	Awarding body	University of Cambridge
2	Teaching institution	University of Cambridge
3	Accreditation details	None
4	Name of final award	Bachelor of Arts
5	Programme title	Historical Studies
6	UCAS code	V500 BA/Ph
7	JACS code(s)	V500
8	Relevant QAA benchmark statement(s)	Philosophy
9	Qualifications framework level	6 (Honours)
10	Date specification produced/last revised	Sept 2010
11	Date specification last reviewed	8 Aug 2011

Facilities and Provision

The core teaching staff consists of 12 University Teaching Officers. In addition a wide variety of people from the Colleges teach in supervisions and assist with the programme of lectures.

The Faculty of Philosophy is situated in the Raised Faculty Building on the Sidgwick Site on West Road in Cambridge, adjacent to the Lecture Block. The Faculty has a well stocked library with circa 17,000 books and 28 periodical subscriptions. Computer and IT resources are available to all students in the nearby PWF facilities.

Educational Aims

- To provide a high quality education that encourages a deep, critical engagement with a range of issues in Western philosophy.
- To provide an education that is informed and invigorated by current directions in research.
- To help students develop a range of qualities of mind, and intellectual skills and abilities that will enable them to make a significant contribution in their chosen careers and walks of life.
- To contribute towards providing the academic teachers and researchers of the future.
- To continue to attract outstanding students.
- To provide in co-operation with the Colleges an integrated system of learning and teaching that can be tailored to the differing backgrounds, abilities and needs of individual students.
- To provide intellectual stimulation for students and to give them the opportunity to develop their philosophical enthusiasms to the best of their potential.

Typical offer A*AA. Admission is based on high achievement in 'A' level or equivalent examinations, school recommendations and success in interview together with a short written test. On average there are 40-50 students in each year, all of whom are full-time. Affiliated students undertake the degree in two years and take Parts IB and II.

Part IA Philosophy is taken in a student's first year. By the end of this year, students should have:

- Acquired a good grounding in central areas of analytical philosophy: metaphysics, philosophy of mind, logic and ethics.
- Acquired a detailed knowledge of some historical set texts.

Part IB Philosophy is usually taken in a student's second year. By the end of this year, students should have:

- Acquired a more advanced knowledge of metaphysics, philosophy of mind and logic than is required for Part IA.
- Broadened their knowledge by studying two further subjects chosen from the following options: ethics; history of philosophy; philosophy of science; political philosophy; and experimental psychology.
- Begun to develop their own individual philosophical interests in specific areas.

Part II Philosophy is taken in a student's final year. On completing it, students should have:

- Achieved an advanced level of knowledge and understanding of philosophy by studying four major areas of the subject in depth.
- Acquired and pursued their own philosophical interests.
- Acquired an ability to think independently about philosophical problems and arguments, and been moved towards formulating philosophical ideas of their own.
- Advanced their understanding of the links between different areas of the subject.

Part II students may offer a dissertation in place of the essay paper. This enables them to engage in an aspect of the research activity of the Faculty and in an integrative approach to the subject.

It is possible to take one or two years of Philosophy before or after transferring from another subject.

During their programme as a whole, students should have

- Acquired the ability to analyse, criticise and construct arguments.
- Learned to express themselves clearly and precisely, both orally and in writing.
- Learned to contribute constructively to discussion.
- Acquired the ability to sustain an essay-length philosophical argument.
- Learned to work independently and to time constraints.

Teaching

Teaching is delivered by lectures, classes and seminars in the Faculty which relate to the papers offered in the Tripos, and by supervisions in the Colleges which provide individual teaching through written work and feedback thereon. Throughout students are encouraged to undertake independent reading and study so as to consolidate what is being taught.

Assessment

Formative assessment is provided through the supervision system where feedback is given in oral and written form. Summative assessment, which takes place at the end of each year is by three hour examination, and (optionally) the submission of essays and dissertation.

Skills

On completion of the course, the University wants students to have acquired the following skills.

- i) Knowledge and understanding of the subject matter.
- ii) Intellectual skills: (e.g. critical, analytical, synthesising and problem- solving skills)
These skills are all central to the study of Philosophy. Responsibility for fostering them is divided between the Faculty and the Colleges. They are developed in lectures, classes, discussion groups, seminars, supervisions and examinations.

The written work which students undertake enables them to learn how to study steadily, assimilate issues and large amounts of literature swiftly, evaluate philosophical positions and evidence critically, to produce succinct arguments to tight deadlines and to engage with those with whom they disagree. Students will have acquired the skill to engage with the thought of major philosophers and their traditions, and will be able to read texts critically and be able to evaluate them in their own context. Students are encouraged to develop ideas and construct philosophical positions of their own. The dissertation develops the skill of articulating an argument at length and working independently under the direction of a supervisor. Students will learn to present an argument and attain analytical skills. By the end of the course students should have completed a degree which could be a basis for postgraduate study.

- iii) Communication skills (written and oral).
Writing skills are practised in weekly essays, submitted essays and dissertations. Responsibility for the development of oral skills falls both to the Faculty, which organises discussion groups and seminars in which students debate philosophical issues, and to the Colleges through Directors of Studies, who arrange supervisions for students and in some cases run College seminars.

Since philosophy students are mainly supervised individually, they have plenty of opportunity to develop their oral skills through philosophical discussion. Within the University there are also societies and reading groups where students can refine their oral skills.

- iv) Organisational skills (e.g. working independently, taking initiative, time-management.)
Philosophy students are, from the beginning of their course, encouraged to work independently and to explore problems on their own initiative. Lecturers and supervisors encourage these skills by providing bibliographies, and referring to articles or books which students may then go and read. An independent approach is also fostered by the fact that students are free to attend any lectures given for the Philosophy Tripos (and indeed any lectures given in the University). Furthermore, submitted essays and Part II dissertations require students to make informed choices and enable them to follow up their own interests.
- v) Inter-personal skill: (e.g. ability to work with or motivate others, flexibility/adaptability).
The ability to work with other people is fostered in Faculty discussion groups, classes and seminars, in supervisions where students are taught together, and in College groups of Philosophy students
- vi) Practical Skills: use of the library, using a bibliography, taking notes effectively.
- vii) Transferable skills: the ability to communicate effectively both orally and in writing; to work to deadlines and under pressure; to manage time; to set priorities; to formulate

an argument; to work independently and with initiative; basic IT skills (email, computer and internet use); critical analysis; to present papers in a seminar context; linguistic skills; skills of analysis and interpretation; self-discipline, self-direction; and respect for other views.

Career Destinations

Over recent years, at least 20% of Philosophy graduates have gone on to do further academic study. A significant proportion of these have gone on to hold academic posts in Philosophy in both the UK and other universities. The majority of graduates obtain jobs in a wide variety of careers: information technology, the civil service, personnel work, media, business and management.

Quality Management

The Faculty Board is responsible for all teaching in the Faculty. The quality of the course is maintained by:

- i) scrutiny of the reports of External Examiners by the Faculty and the General Board's Education Section. Suggestions by them for improvement are acted on where necessary;
- ii) student feedback through lecture questionnaires;
- iii) student participation in the Staff/Student Committee and the Faculty Board;
- iv) appraisal and evaluation of staff, and the provision of staff development programmes; and
- v) the General Board's programme for reviewing Faculties and Departments every six years.

Indicators of Quality

In the 2001 Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) the Faculty was awarded the highest mark of 5*, and in the 2008 RAE 62% of the submission was rated as being world-leading or internationally excellent.

The Faculty also received the highest possible rating (24/24) in the latest Teaching Quality evaluation by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education in 2001.