

Programme Specification 2025-26**PHILOSOPHY TRIPOS**

Awarding body	University of Cambridge
Teaching institution	Faculty of Philosophy
Accreditation details	None
Name of final award	Bachelor of Arts
Programme title	Philosophy
UCAS code	V500 BA/Ph
HECoS code(s)	100337 (philosophy)
Relevant QAA benchmark statement(s)	Philosophy
Qualifications framework level	6 (Honours)
Date specification produced	June 2020

Facilities and Provision

The core teaching staff consists of 13 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.

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.

Minimum offer A*AA. Admission is based on high achievement in 'A' level or equivalent examinations, school recommendations, and success in interview. 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, logic, ethics and political philosophy.

- 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, epistemology and philosophical logic than is required for Part IA.
- Broadened their knowledge by studying three further subjects chosen from the following options: history of analytic philosophy; ethics; Greek and Roman philosophy; early modern philosophy; epistemology and metaphysics of science; political philosophy; experimental psychology; jurisprudence; and aesthetics and philosophy of art.
- Begun to develop their own individual philosophical interests in specific areas.

Part IB students may submit extended essays in lieu of one of the subject papers. The Faculty Board will confirm which papers are eligible in its Guide to Courses.

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 submit a dissertation in lieu of the General paper AND submit extended essays in lieu of a subject paper, hence they have the option of submitting 40% course work. 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, law, the civil service, personnel work, media, business, and management.

Management of Education Quality and Standards

The University ensures high quality of teaching and learning in the following ways:

- Scrutiny of the External Examiners Reports for all teaching programmes
- Encouraging student engagement at both the local level, through involvement in Faculty and Departmental Committees, and at a central level by participation in nationally benchmarked surveys
- Participation in the biennial Education Monitoring and Review Process to explore provision, share good practice and suggest constructive courses of action
- Mentoring, appraisal, and peer review of staff, and encouraging staff participation in personal development programmes

Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information in this programme specification. At the time of publication, the programme specification has been approved by the relevant Faculty Board (or equivalent). Programme specifications are reviewed annually, however, during the course of the academic year, and any approved changes to the programme will be communicated to enrolled students through email notification or publication in the *Reporter*. The relevant Faculty or Department will endeavour to update the programme specification accordingly, and prior to the start of the next academic year.

Further information about specifications and an archive of programme specifications for all awards of the University is available online at: <https://www.camdata.admin.cam.ac.uk/>