



**UNIVERSITY
OF LONDON**

Programme Specification 2021–2022

Philosophy

BA

Diploma of Higher Education
Certificate of Higher Education

Important document – please read

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Important information regarding the Programme Specification

Last revised 22 October 2020

The Programme Specification gives a broad outline of the structure and content of the programme, the entry level qualifications, as well as the learning outcomes students will achieve as they progress. Some of the information referred to in this programme specification is included in more detail on the University of London [website](#). Where this is the case, links to the relevant webpage are included.

Where links to external organisations are provided, the University of London is not responsible for their content and does not recommend nor necessarily agree with opinions expressed and services provided at those sites.

If you have a query about any of the programme information provided, whether here or on the website, registered students should use the *ask a question* button in the [student portal](#); otherwise the *Contact Us* button on each webpage should be used.

Terminology

The following language is specific to the programme:

Course: Individual units of the programme are called courses. Each course is a self-contained, formally structured learning experience with a coherent and explicit set of learning outcomes and assessment criteria.

Key revisions made

Programme specifications are revised annually. The quality committee of Birkbeck, as part of its annual review of standards, confirms the programme structure and the educational aims and learning outcomes, and advises on any development in student support.

Where changes have been made which may impact on continuing students, these are listed below. For all new students, the programme and general information provided in this document is correct and accurate and will be applicable for the current year.

Significant changes made to the programme specification 2021-2022

A notice on **Alternative Assessments during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Outbreak** has been added (see page 3).

Alternative Assessments during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Outbreak

In line with our current General Regulations, the University may offer you alternative assessments where necessary. This includes holding online timed assessments in place of written examinations, which are usually held at examination centres. Please note that this statement replaces any published information relating to assessments or written examinations in any of our materials including the website. Previously published materials relating to examinations should therefore be read in conjunction with this statement.

Programme title and awards

Undergraduate degrees of the University of London are awarded with Honours. The award certificate will indicate the level of the academic performance (Honours) achieved by classifying the award. The classification of the degree will be based on the ratified marks from the completed assessments.

The standard classification system for Bachelor's degrees with Honours is:

First-Class; Upper Second-Class; Lower Second-Class; Third-Class.

A Pass Degree or Ordinary Degree is a degree without Honours.

Specific rules for the classification of awards are given in the [Programme Regulations](#), under Scheme of Award.

Programme title

Philosophy

Qualifications

Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy

Diploma of Higher Education in Philosophy

Certificate of Higher Education in Philosophy

Intermediate qualifications

The intermediate qualifications for this programme are the Certificate of Higher Education and Diploma of Higher Education as listed above. Upon successful completion, students will receive the intermediate qualification for which they are registered and continue to a higher qualification. However, they may not request a lower qualification than that which they are registered on, unless as an exit qualification. The specific rules are given in the [Programme Regulations](#) under Progression rules.

Exit qualifications

- Diploma of Higher Education in Philosophy
- Certificate of Higher Education in Philosophy

An exit qualification is an intermediate qualification, for which the student may not have registered at the outset but which may be awarded on completion of specific modules/courses (or credit accumulated) in a longer programme of study, if the student leaves the programme.

Exit qualifications are awarded at the discretion of the Board of Examiners and once a student has accepted an exit qualification they will not be permitted to continue their study on the same programme with the University of London. The specific rules are given in the [Programme Regulations](#) under Scheme of Award.

Individual course on a stand-alone basis

The Level 4 *Introduction to Philosophy* course may be studied on a stand-alone basis.

Award titles may be abbreviated as follows:

Bachelor of Arts – BA

Diploma of Higher Education – DipHE

Certificate of Higher Education – CertHE

Level of the programmes

The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies (FHEQ) forms part of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education of the [Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education](#) (QAA).

The qualifications are placed at the following Levels of the FHEQ:

BA Level 6

DipHE Level 5

CertHE Level 4

Relevant QAA subject benchmarks group(s)

See the [QAA website](#) for information:

Philosophy

Awarding body

University of London

Registering body

University of London

Academic direction

Birkbeck, University of London

Accreditation by professional or statutory body

Not applicable

Language of study and assessment

English

Mode of study

Flexible and online study

Programme structures

The BA Philosophy consists of 12 courses:

- Four Level 4 (compulsory) courses *plus*
- Four Level 5 courses chosen from a selection *plus*

- Three Level 6 courses chosen from a selection *plus*
- The Dissertation

Diploma of Higher Education

The Diploma of Higher Education consists of 8 courses:

- Four Level 4 (compulsory) courses *plus*
- Four Level 5 courses chosen from a selection

Certificate of Higher Education

The Certificate of Higher Education consists of four courses:

- Four Level 4 (compulsory) courses

Some of the courses (at Level 5 and above) have prerequisites. Prerequisite courses must either

- be passed in a previous examination *or*
- be taken in the same examination period as the courses for which they are prerequisite.

To be considered for the award of the BA, a student must usually have passed all 12 courses (four at Level 4, four at Level 5 and four at Level 6) with a mark of 40% or above. However, a student may be compensated for one failed course (excluding the Dissertation) if the mark achieved is between 30–39%.

To be considered for the award of the DipHE, a student must have attempted and passed, at a mark of 40 or above, eight courses (four Level 4 courses, and four Level 5 courses).

To be considered for the award of the CertHE, a student must have attempted and passed, at a mark of 40 or above, the four Level 4 courses.

Maximum and minimum periods of registration

The maximum and minimum period of registration, from a student's effective date of registration, are:

Qualification	Minimum	Maximum
BA Philosophy	Three years*	Six years†
DipHE Philosophy	Two years	Five years
CertHE Philosophy	One Year	Five years
Individual course taken on standalone basis	One year	Two years

* This period may vary if recognition of prior learning is permitted.

† Students registered prior to 2020-21 will retain their maximum period of registration of 8 years.

Study materials are made available after registration and on payment of the applicable fee.

Credit value of courses

Further information about the credit systems used by universities in the UK and Europe is provided by the [Quality Assurance Agency](#) and the [European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System](#).

Where credits are assigned to courses of a programme, credit indicates the amount of learning carried out in terms of the notional number of study hours needed, and the specified Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-awarding Bodies (FHEQ) credit level indicates the depth, complexity and intellectual demand of learning involved. The details below indicate the UK credits and the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) values.

For the Philosophy programme, credits are assigned to the courses as follows:

- 30 UK credits or 15 ECTS credits at FHEQ levels 4, 5 and 6.
- A student awarded the BA will have accumulated 360 UK credits or 180 ECTS credits.
- A student awarded the DipHE will have accumulated 240 UK credits or 120 ECTS credits.
- A student awarded the CertHE will have accumulated 120 UK credits or 60 ECTS credits.

One UK credit equates to a notional ten hours of study.

Recognition of prior learning

Recognition of prior learning is a generic term for the process by which we recognise and, where appropriate, award credit for learning that has taken place elsewhere. Where the prior learning covered a similar syllabus to a module/course on the University of London programme, credit will be awarded as if you took the University of London module/course.

See the [General Regulations](#) (Section 3) and [Programme Regulations](#) for more rules relating to prior learning.

A BA Philosophy student may apply for recognition of prior learning for up to four FHEQ level 4 courses. Recognition of prior learning will not be considered for level 5 and 6 courses.

Further information on recognition of prior learning is on the [website](#).

Entrance requirements

Applicants must submit an application in line with the procedures and deadlines set out on the [website](#).

All entrance requirements are set out in detail on the programme page under [Entry Requirements](#).

We consider qualifications from around the world. Details are available [here](#) and in the [Qualifications for Entrance](#) schedule

General entrance requirements for Undergraduate Degrees and Diplomas of Higher Education

Age:

Applicants must normally be at least 17 years of age on or before the registration deadline.

Qualifications:

Applicants must:

- have passed qualifications that satisfy category G in the Qualifications for Entrance schedule;
- meet any additional programme specific entrance requirements; *and*
- satisfy English language requirements.

Entrance requirements for Certificates of Higher Education

Age:

Applicants should check programme requirements which are given under [Requirements](#) of the programme.

Qualifications:

Applicants must:

- meet programme-specific entrance requirements; and
- satisfy English language requirements.

All details of the programme specific entry requirements are given on the programme page, under [Entry Requirements](#).

English language requirements

All applicants must satisfy the English language requirements for the programme. These are set out in detail on the programme page under [Entry Requirements](#).

Additional information on English language proficiency tests are given on the [website](#).

Where an applicant does not meet the prescribed English language proficiency requirements but believes that they can demonstrate the requisite proficiency for admission the University may, at its discretion, consider the application.

Internet access and computer specification

Students will require regular access to a computer (or mobile device*) with an internet connection to use the University of London's online resources and systems. A webcam may be required in the event that online timed assessments (if offered) are proctored, and in such a case, it is a student's responsibility to ensure that they have a webcam.

The computer should have at least the following minimum specification:

- a web browser with Cookies and JavaScript enabled (a latest version of Firefox, Chrome or Internet Explorer is recommended);
- a good internet connection;

And the following applications installed:

- a word processor that accepts Microsoft Word formats (.doc and .docx);
- a pdf reader;
- software for playing mp3 and mp4 files.

Students with specific access requirements

The University of London welcomes applications from disabled students and/or those who have access requirements. The University will make every effort to provide reasonable adjustments to enable those with a disability, learning difficulty or access requirements to have the same opportunity as all other students to successfully complete their studies.

The University is committed to managing the application procedure and the programme itself to ensure that services are accessible for all students and that an inclusive environment is created. Students with a disability, or others who may need access arrangements to assist in taking examinations, should complete the relevant section of the application form, or contact the [Inclusive Practice Manager](#). A separate room or other arrangements may be considered.

Requests are considered by a University panel, whose purpose is to ensure that students with disabilities and/or specific access requirements are neither advantaged nor disadvantaged by such arrangements when compared with other students. These considerations remain separate from the academic selection processes.

For further information, see [Inclusive Practice Policy](#)

Sources of funding and scholarships

Information about potential sources of funding and scholarships is updated annually and where available is included in the prospectus web pages.

For further information see the [website](#)

Educational aims and learning outcomes of the programme

Learning outcomes of the programme:

The main educational aims of this programme are to offer a challenging, flexible scheme of study invigorated by research. The central aim of Philosophy is to understand the world and our place in it; this programme is intended to bring rigour to the students' thinking and advance students' powers of engagement with the central questions that philosophers ask. Students will be introduced to and will become familiar with a range of major philosophical texts.

A central aim of the CertHE Philosophy is to make it possible for students who have done no philosophy, to continue with their studies to the BA level. The *Introduction to Philosophy* course gives all students grounding in the methods of the subject, as well as introducing elements of the Level 5 courses that follow.

In the BA programme there is a natural progression from the compulsory courses to the Level 5 courses and to the Level 6 courses. The Level 5 and Level 6 courses build on each other in terms of their content (some courses have prerequisites). Students will develop a

sophistication of thinking as they work through them. Successful completion of the BA may allow students to progress to postgraduate study or a related area of the arts and humanities.

The programme aims to:

- expand knowledge and understanding of a range of ancient and contemporary philosophical texts;
- foster an awareness of ideas and arguments of some of the major philosophers in the history of the subject;
- develop an understanding of some central theories in the field including logic, metaphysics and epistemology;
- stimulate awareness of some major issues currently at the frontiers of philosophical debate and research;
- promote clear thinking and a rigorous approach in the analysis of controversial and complex arguments;
- encourage self-development into professionally organised and interactive individuals by practicing skills of selection, analysis, assimilation and communication in the written domain.

Subject specific – knowledge and understanding

A **BA Philosophy** student will be able to:

- interpret philosophical texts drawn from a variety of traditions and ages;
- show an understanding of some of the key theories in philosophy;
- identify underlying issues and respond with clarity and rigour to arguments presented in philosophical texts;
- understand and apply terminology appropriate to Philosophy;
- use appropriate examples to support or challenge a position;
- recognise relevant and irrelevant considerations;
- produce written work to adequate professional standards in organisation, relevance, expression and referencing.

A **DipHE Philosophy** student will be able to:

- understand philosophical texts drawn from a variety of traditions and ages;
- appreciate some of the key theories in philosophy;
- identify underlying issues and respond with clarity to arguments presented in philosophical texts;
- understand and apply terminology appropriate to Philosophy;
- use some examples to support or challenge a position;
- recognise relevant and irrelevant considerations;

- produce written work to adequate standards in organisation, relevance, expression and referencing.

A **CertHE Philosophy** student will be able to:

- achieve some understanding of philosophical texts drawn from different traditions and ages;
- describe some of the key theories in philosophy;
- identify issues and respond to arguments presented in philosophical texts;
- understand terminology appropriate to Philosophy;
- use examples to support a position;
- recognise relevant and irrelevant considerations;
- produce written work which is organised, and clearly referenced.

Intellectual and transferable skills

A **BA Philosophy** student will be able to:

- conduct detailed textual analysis;
- critically analyse arguments and understand when and how these might be flawed or invalid;
- assimilate and evaluate alternative views;
- formulate coherent and persuasive interpretations and arguments;
- respond with insight and sensitivity to complex, unfamiliar and controversial arguments and debates;
- have fluent and effective communication and discussion skills in a written context;
- have a capacity to handle ideas in rational, critical and evaluative ways;
- be open-minded and have a capacity for independent judgments;
- manage their own learning, including working effectively to deadlines;
- organise information, and to assimilate and evaluate competing arguments.

A **DipHE Philosophy** student will be able to:

- conduct textual analysis;
- critically analyse arguments and appreciate when and how these might be flawed or invalid;
- assimilate alternative views;
- formulate coherent interpretations and arguments;
- respond with insight to unfamiliar and controversial arguments and debates;
- have fluent communication and discussion skills in a written context;

- have a capacity to handle ideas in critical ways;
- be open-minded and have a capacity for independent judgments;
- manage their own learning, including working effectively to deadlines;
- organise information, and assimilate competing arguments.

A **CertHE Philosophy** student will be able to:

- conduct textual analysis;
- analyse and understand arguments;
- assimilate alternative views;
- formulate interpretations and arguments;
- respond to complex, unfamiliar and controversial arguments and debates;
- have good communication and discussion skills in a written context;
- have a capacity to handle ideas in rational and evaluative ways;
- be open-minded and have a capacity for independent judgments;
- manage their own learning, including working effectively to deadlines;
- organise information, and assimilate competing arguments.

Learning, teaching and assessment strategies

All students will be given access to the programme's VLE where they can preview and download subject guides, supplementary materials and reading lists, as well as interact with other students in discussion groups. Tutors run online discussion forums for Level 4 courses throughout the academic year. Students have the option of submitting practice essays for feedback by academic staff.

Students have electronic access to subject guides appropriate to each course and also receive a hard copy textbook, *Reading Philosophy Selected Texts with a Method for Beginners*. The subject guides introduce the subjects within the syllabus and should be used alongside the recommended books and articles which can be bought, borrowed from libraries, or accessed via the Online Library. The subject guides show the student how to approach a topic using primary and secondary resources in an organised and productive manner. Advice and practical information such as study techniques, planning, and preparation for assessment is available in the Programme handbook. Past examination papers and detailed *Examiners' commentaries* are also available. These help the students understand what is expected of them. Within this framework, students manage their own learning.

Assessment criteria for the programme take into account the level at which these skills have been achieved.

Assessment methods

In line with our current General Regulations, the University may offer students alternative assessments where necessary. This includes holding online timed assessments in place of written examinations, which are usually held at examination centres.

For each course, students will be assessed by unseen written examination and for BA students, also by a Dissertation. Questions are structured to allow students to demonstrate that they have acquired appropriate knowledge and understanding. The way that students manage data, solve problems, evaluate ideas and the organisational skills they use to structure their written answers allows the standard of intellectual and transferable skills to be assessed.

Each course will be assessed by one two-hour (Level 4 and 5) or three-hour (Level 6) written examination. The exception to this is the Dissertation course in the BA, which is assessed by a 7,500 word dissertation.

The written examinations take place on one occasion each year, normally commencing in May. These are held at established centres worldwide.

Full details of the dates of all examinations are available on the [website](#).

Individual course on a stand-alone basis

If taken on a stand-alone basis, a student may choose whether or not to be formally assessed in the credit bearing *Introduction to Philosophy* course. Students who choose to be formally assessed will be examined through a two-hour unseen written examination.

Student support and guidance

The following summarises the support and guidance available to students:

- [Student Portal](#): for accessing student induction, study skills support, careers and employability resources, student wellbeing advice.
- The Virtual Learning Environment (VLE): This gives access to materials (including lessons, activities and assignments) for each course studied.
- The VLE also includes a range of additional study resources such as:
 - Online student café and discussion areas which allow students to communicate with each other.
 - Past examination papers and Examiners' commentaries; these provide generic feedback from assessment.
 - Employability skills module; guidance on how to manage your career in the future.
- [Student Guide](#): This provides information which is common to all students and gives information about matters of importance from the start of a student's relationship with the University of London through to their graduation.
- [Programme Handbook](#): This tells students how to access available resources and assessment and examinations procedures.

- Course subject guides for each course studied; these introduce and develop the topics.
- [The Online Library](#): This provides a range of full-text, multidisciplinary databases where journal articles, book reviews and reports can be found.
- University of London library: Registered students can use the resources located within the Senate House library.
- A University of London email account and web area for personal information management.

Quality evaluation and enhancement

The University of London delivers the majority of its flexible and distance learning programmes through a collaboration between the University of London Worldwide and member institutions of the University of London. However some of the flexible and distance learning programmes draw solely on academic input from the University of London, and are delivered without academic lead by a member institutions. The policies, partnerships (where applicable) and quality assurance mechanisms applicable for the programmes are defined in the following key documents: The Quality Framework, the [Quality Assurance Schedules, Guidelines for Examinations, General Regulations](#) and, for each programme, [programme specific regulations](#).

Awards standards

All University of London qualifications have to align with the [Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies](#) to assure appropriate awards standards. In addition, every programme that is developed by a member institution of the University of London (or a consortium with representation by more than one member institution) will be developed to the same standard as would be applied within the institution concerned. Proportionate and robust approval procedures, including external scrutiny and student engagement are in place for all programmes. Learning materials are written and all assessments are set and marked by academic staff who are required to apply the University's academic standards.

Review and evaluation mechanisms

Some of the key mechanisms in place to assure the standards of all University of London awards and the quality of the student experience, include:

- Annual programme reports: produced for all programmes in order to review and enhance the provision and to plan ahead;
- Independent external examiners: submit reports every year to confirm that a programme has been assessed properly and meets the appropriate academic standards;
- Annual student information statistics: prepared for all systematic reporting within the University of London;
- Periodic programme reviews: carried out every 4-6 years to review how a programme has developed over time and to make sure that it remains current and up-to-date.

Improvements are made as necessary to ensure that systems remain effective and rigorous.

Student feedback and engagement

The principal channel for collecting feedback from students is the Student Experience Survey. Carried out every two years, this collects feedback from the student body on a range of topics relating to the student lifecycle. The results are analysed externally and then considered in a number of different ways, including by the programme team, principal committees and the senior leadership team. Details of any resulting actions taken are published on the Virtual Learning Environment and the Student Portal.

Additionally, on completion of their programme of study students will be invited to take a survey that seeks to measure what they have gained from their studies.

There are also opportunities for students to get involved in governance. An undergraduate and postgraduate student member is appointed by the University to the majority of committees through an annual appointment round. Some programmes also recruit student members at the programme level. Students are frequently invited to take part in quality review processes such as Periodic Programme Reviews, Programme approval, Thematic Reviews, MOOC review panels and ad hoc focus groups. Opportunities such as these are advertised through social media and on the website. More information can be found on the [website](#).

Students can also apply to join the Student Voice Group, which meets four times a year to consider initiatives for enhancing student experience. Notes from these meetings are published on the Student Portal.

VLEs also provide the opportunity for informal feedback and discussion.

After graduation

Further study

Successful completion of the programme can allow students to progress to a higher level qualification in the subject area.

Graduate employment routes

At registration, students are asked to complete a small number of questions relating to where they are in their career planning. This data is used to assist with the implementation of employability strategies and interventions.

The analytical tradition of philosophy makes it a particularly good training for virtually any profession. The study of philosophy encourages students to reason and assess the reasoning of others. These skills translate easily and naturally to such areas as management and law.

The Alumni Community

Upon finishing a course of study, graduates automatically become part of the University of London alumni community, a diverse global network of more than one million graduates in over 180 countries, providing lifelong links to the University and to each other.

Alumni are encouraged to keep in touch after they graduate and to become active members of the alumni community; in return they receive a number of benefits and services, including an extensive programme of events and engagement opportunities.

More information is available on the alumni [webpage](#).

Follow the alumni community on social media: [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#)