



**UNIVERSITY
OF LONDON**

Programme Specification 2023–2024

Epidemiology

MSc

PGDip

PGCert

Individual courses

Important document – please read



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Important information regarding the Programme Specification

Last revised 6 June 2023

About this document

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 **Epidemiology** programmes:

Modules: Individual units of a programme are called modules. Each module 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 Senate Postgraduate Teaching Committee of the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, 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.

Any changes that may impact on continuing students 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 2023-2024:

EPM301 Epidemiology of Infectious Diseases. The assessment weighting has changed from 70% unseen examination and 30% assessed assignment to two assessed assignments, weighted 60% and 40% respectively. For students who first registered for the module prior to 2022/23 and who need to resit or who are partially through the previous method of assessment, the last opportunity for students to take the prior method of assessment for EPM301 (70% exam and 30% AA) will be the June 2024 exam session.

EPM307 Global Epidemiology of Non-communicable Diseases : The assessment of this module has changed from 70% unseen examination and 30% assessed assignment to one assessed assignment (100%). For students who first registered for the module prior to 2023/24 and who need to resit or who are partially through the previous method of assessment, the last opportunity for students to take the prior method of assessment for EPM307 (70% exam and 30% AA) will be the 2024/25 academic year.

Programme title and qualifications

Postgraduate Degrees of the University of London may be classified. The award certificate will indicate the level of the academic performance achieved by classifying the award. The classification of the degree will be based on the ratified marks from the completed assessments.

The classification system for the Epidemiology programmes is as follows:

Distinction; Merit; Pass.

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

Programme title

Epidemiology

Qualifications

Master of Science in Epidemiology

Postgraduate Diploma in Epidemiology

Postgraduate Certificate in Epidemiology

Exit qualifications

Postgraduate Diploma in Epidemiology

Postgraduate Certificate in Epidemiology

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 (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 normally be permitted to continue their study of the same award with the University of London.

Individual modules

There is also provision for individual modules to be studied on a stand-alone basis.

Qualification titles may be abbreviated as follows:

Master of Science in Epidemiology - MSc

Postgraduate Diploma in Epidemiology - PGDip

Postgraduate Certificate in Epidemiology - PGCert

Level of the programmes

The Frameworks 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 (including exit awards) are placed at the following Levels of the FHEQ:

- MSc Level 7
- PGDip Level 7
- PGCert Level 7

Individual modules are offered at Level 7.

Relevant QAA subject benchmarks

Not applicable

Awarding body

University of London

Registering bodies

University of London and London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine.

Academic direction

London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (LSHTM)

Accreditation by professional or statutory body

Not applicable

Language of study and assessment

English

Mode of study

Flexible and online study

Blended learning

Students may also be permitted to study up to two elective modules by blended learning in place of distance learning modules. Blended learning enables a student to combine distance learning with a period of part-time study at the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine. An additional fee will be payable.

Programme structures

The **MSc Epidemiology** consists of:

- Four compulsory EPM1 modules
- Two compulsory EPM2 modules

And either

- Three EPM3 modules selected from a list of options

or

Programme Specification 2023-2024 Epidemiology MSc/PGDip/PGCert/Individual modules

- Two EPM3 module and one further elective module selected from a list of options

And

- A compulsory Project Report

And

- A Final Examination

The **PGDip Epidemiology** consists of:

- Four compulsory EPM1 modules
- Two compulsory EPM2 modules

And either

- Two EPM3 modules selected from a list of options

or

- One EPM3 module selected from a list of options and one further module selected from a list of options.

The **PGCert Epidemiology** consists of:

- Four compulsory EPM1 modules

Full details of the Scheme of Award are included in the [Programme Regulations](#).

Maximum and minimum periods of registration

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

	Minimum	Maximum
MSc	Two years	Five years
PGDip	Two years	Five years
PGCert	One year	Five years
Credit-bearing individual modules	One year	Two years

Study materials are made available at the start of the academic year after registration and on payment of the applicable fee.

Credit value of modules

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 modules of a programme, credit indicates the amount of learning carried out in terms of the notional number of study hours needed, and the specified 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 Epidemiology programme, credits are assigned to the modules as follows:

- 15 UK credits or 7.5 ECTS credits for each module at FHEQ level 7
- 45 UK credits or 22.5 ECTS credits for the project at FHEQ level 7.

Each award equates to the following number of credits:

- MSc Epidemiology - 180 UK credits or 90 ECTS credits
- PGDip Epidemiology - 120 UK credits or 60 ECTS credits
- PGCert Epidemiology - 60 UK credits or 30 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 at an institution other than the University of London. See the [General Regulations](#) (Section 3) and [Programme Regulations](#) for more rules relating to prior learning.

For the Epidemiology programmes the University of London may recognise your prior learning and allow you exemption from a compulsory module towards the qualification. This can only be considered at the point of application for the programme and may require a student to select a replacement module, or credit may be transferred if it hasn't been used in a previous award.

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

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 the [Entry Requirements](#) tab.

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 portable computer with an internet connection to use the University of London's online resources and systems.

Students must be able to download and install software to their Windows or MacOS device to include secure examination browsers for online assessment purposes (if offered on your programme of study). Depending on the security settings for each assessment you may be required to have full administrator rights on your computer to install and run the software needed to take part in the assessment. Full administration rights are likely to apply to a computer that you own but not to one provided by your employer, for example.

Computer requirements

The portable computer must have at least the following minimum specification:

- Windows: 10 and 11 on 64-bit platforms
- Mac OS X 10.15 and higher (for some assessments MacOS Big Sur(version 11) as a minimum)
- CPUs newer than 2011 (Intel Sandy Bridge or newer)
- OpenGL 2.0 graphics driver
- Local storage for the recording of proctored examinations (75MB per hour)
- Web camera & microphone (internal or external)
- A broadband internet connection capable of streaming video and a minimum of 0.15Mbps upload speed.
- Minimum device requirements are subject to change and older operating systems may become obsolete over time.
- It should also have the following applications installed:
- Word processor (for Microsoft Word documents)

- A PDF reader (e.g. Adobe)

Some modules/courses may have additional requirements such as video and audio recording options, Microsoft Excel, STATA, statistical or other specialist software. Where this is the case you will find information on the course webpages.

Please note: full mobile access is not available for all programmes. Proctored assessments will not work on any smartphone, tablet, Chromebook, Linux Operating Systems or other mobile device of any kind.

Additional requirements

- Students may need to use a calculator.
- A headset/microphone may be required to participate in live webinar sessions online.

Students with 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 programmes

These programmes aim to prepare students with the knowledge and skills to make valuable contributions to both epidemiological research and public health. Epidemiological methods are used increasingly in medical research, public health practice and health care evaluation to investigate the causes of disease, and to evaluate interventions to prevent or control disease. These programmes are mainly designed for those planning careers in epidemiological research, as well as academics in other health areas and other health professionals. They are also suitable for those who need an understanding of epidemiology, such as medical journalists and scientific officers in government and industry. Successful completion of the MSc may allow students to progress to a higher research degree.

The main educational aims of these programmes are to offer a challenging scheme of study invigorated by research, which advances students' ability to develop the academic and practical skills needed as an epidemiologist. Students will be encouraged to develop a range of transferable and subject specific expertise using their initiative and working out problems for themselves.

The programmes aim to:

- develop knowledge and understanding of the fundamental skills needed to become competent in epidemiology;
- enable students to understand developments in the field of epidemiology;
- encourage independent critical and evaluative skills that can be used to apply independent scientific judgment;
- teach students how to apply the conceptual and practical tools needed to initiate research
- facilitate self-development into professionally organised and interactive individuals by practicing skills of selection, assimilation and communication.

The learning outcomes of the programmes are as follows:

Knowledge and understanding of:

- the role of epidemiology and its contribution to health-related research and policy
- the main types of epidemiological studies and the key issues with their use

Intellectual and Practical skills – able to:

- design and critically appraise epidemiological studies and protocols, with consideration of the study question, study design, data collection methods, sources of bias, and appropriate statistical analyses
- manage, summarise, analyse, and present epidemiological data (using statistical software) and interpret findings appropriately given study limitations
- apply advanced epidemiological concepts and methods to specific fields (e.g. non-communicable disease epidemiology, infectious disease epidemiology, social epidemiology, spatial epidemiology, prediction modelling, clinical trials)

Transferable skills – able to:

- use problem-solving skills in a range of situations, working individually or in a team

- design, execute, and report on a substantial independent research project
- appraise, critique and communicate health data and health research findings
- manage their own learning, including working effectively to deadlines

Students who pass the core EPM1 modules will have the essential introduction to a variety of methods, approaches and concepts in epidemiology. They will have an understanding of the fundamentals of epidemiology, including key statistical principles and will be able to demonstrate knowledge of the practical aspects needed for planning and conducting research. Core module students will also be able to show basic skills in writing research papers and searching and evaluating the scientific literature.

PGDip and MSc students who proceed to the EPM2 and elective modules will build on the foundations learnt from the core modules. These students will learn how to design their own epidemiological research study, prepare a grant application and develop further statistical knowledge and skills needed to analyse and interpret data from the common forms of epidemiological studies. Students will then choose from a range of options which further knowledge in specific areas.

MSc students will also apply the epidemiological skills they have learnt to a particular problem in an area of their own interest and produce a project report.

Learning, teaching and assessment strategies

Learning is self-directed against a detailed set of learning objectives for each module using the materials provided. This includes reading and reflecting on computer-assisted learning (CAL) materials and/or text-based Study Guides which introduce, explain and apply the principles and methods covered in each module.

Each module is divided into sessions covering different topics. The sessions contain a number of elements designed to make learning manageable and to check on the progress they have made. Each session would usually contain:

- Aim of the session
- Learning objectives
- Activities to further students' understanding and skills and assess what they have learnt
- Feedback which follows each activity, giving the correct or optimal answer to questions posed, or discusses issues that have been raised
- Summary containing the key learning points of the session.

The CAL material and Study Guides are supported by Reading Lists which give online links to relevant articles (usually via the LSHTM online library). For statistical modules, a practical workbook of exercises is provided together with statistical software and practice datasets. Selected textbooks (provided as e-books) are provided for some Epidemiology modules, along with recommendations for further reading.

Students are encouraged to communicate with tutors and fellow students via online discussion forums. In this way, students may ask questions, and develop and negotiate conclusions with others, which are key components in the acquisition of knowledge, understanding and transferable skills.

Most Epidemiology modules have at least one Formative Assignment (FA) for the students to complete. These do not count towards the final award but students are strongly encouraged to do these. The FAs give students an opportunity to i) apply their newly learnt knowledge and skills, thereby reviewing their progress and understanding, ii) highlight to tutors any difficulties relating to that topic, and iii) receive personal tutorial feedback on their work and their highlighted issues.

Assignments, essays, projects, reports, dissertations and other similar work must be the student's own work and must be written without the assistance of other people, except where they are expressly permitted to work as a group and submit a piece of work jointly. Where such a piece of work is submitted, all students working in the group will be required to submit a declaration for all such work, confirming their participation in completing the submitted work.

Advice and practical information on study techniques, planning and preparation for assessment is available in the LSHTM programme-specific Student Handbook (which is available online to students after registration) and [Academic Writing Handbook](#). Students manage their own learning and study schedule, but advice can be sought from the support team at any stage of the academic year.

Formal module assessment includes an unseen time-limited written paper examination and/or assessed assignment, depending on the module:

- Where a module is assessed by time-limited examination, this will consist of questions structured to allow students to show 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 answers allows the standard of intellectual and transferable skills to be assessed.
- Some modules are assessed entirely or in part by a written assessed assignment (AA). The AA gives students an opportunity to apply the skills taught in the module in a practical way that often reflects a real-life scenario. In some assignments, group work is involved while in others there is the opportunity to explore issues in depth individually, encouraging independent thinking and judgement.

In addition, there are two other assessed components of the MSc:

- The Final Examination Paper EPM400 (MSc only) draws on the material from all the compulsory modules and should be taken at the time when students attempt the last of the written papers for the MSc. It assesses not only the knowledge and understanding of the compulsory modules but students can also draw on material they have covered in elective modules and in their professional practice, to demonstrate depth of understanding.
- MSc students will also submit a Project Report (EPM500). This will allow students to develop and deepen epidemiological concepts and skills learnt during the programme. Students will be able to apply epidemiological skills to a real-life issue, and to analyse data or literature in depth. It also allows students to show independent research skills and their ability to think critically and develop original ideas. It will test the student's ability to plan, and to produce an extended piece of clear and coherent writing.

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

Assessment methods

All examinations are scheduled using an online delivery method. You must ensure that your device is kept up to date and complies with [University Computer Requirements](#).

Wherever they are held, all examinations take place on the same dates and at specific times in line with the published timetables.

Each core EPM1 module (PGCert, PGDip and MSc) will be assessed by one time-limited examination with the exception of EPM105 Writing and reviewing epidemiological papers which will be assessed by a written assignment.

Modules EPM201 Study design: writing a grant application, EPM202 Statistical methods in epidemiology, EPM304 Advanced statistical methods in epidemiology and EPM307 Global Epidemiology of Non-communicable Diseases will be assessed by a written assignment.

EPM301 Epidemiology of infectious diseases will be assessed by two assessed assignments weighted 60:40.

EPM302 Modelling and the dynamics of infectious diseases will be assessed by one time-limited examination and a written assignment. The marks awarded for this module will be weighted 70:30 (time-limited examination: assignment).

The Final Examination Paper EPM400 (MSc only) will be assessed by one time-limited examination which draws on material from all the compulsory modules and should be taken at the time when students attempt the last of the written papers for the MSc.

The Project Report (MSc only) will be assessed by submission of one written report of up to 10,000 words. It should be submitted in the final year of the degree.

The time-limited examinations take place on one occasion each year, normally commencing in June.

Individual modules

A student may choose whether or not to be formally assessed in the credit bearing individual modules for which they are registered. Students who choose to be formally assessed will be examined in the same way as students studying for a full award.

For full details of the dates of all examinations, refer to the [website](#).

Student support and guidance

The following summarises the support and guidance available to students:

- University of London [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 Regulations](#)
- [The University of London Online Library](#): This provides access to a range of full-text, multidisciplinary databases where journal articles, book reviews and reports can be found.
- Senate House Library: Registered students may use the resources located within the University of London Senate House library
- Employability skills module – guidance on how to manage your career in the future, available through the VLE.
- A University of London email account and web area for personal information management.

Support and guidance from LSHTM

- The LSHTM Moodle Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). This gives online access to the main module materials, module discussion forums, information on assignments, links to essential and recommended readings (where available), past examination papers and examiner reports, and study skills' resources.
- [LSHTM online library](#) resources.
- Student support staff are available to offer help and advice on administrative matters. Programme Directors can also be contacted for personal advice e.g. planning studies, advice on elective module options. Communication may either be via the online 'Student Support Help' discussion forum on Moodle or by email, and sometimes by Zoom if needed.
- Each module has at least one Module Organiser (MO) and a team of tutors assigned to it. The tutor team provides academic support to those studying on specific modules, in the following ways:
 - assisting in interpreting and understanding the material presented by answering queries on the online discussion forums
 - grading and providing written feedback on assignments
 - offering some real-time 'webinars' in which students are encouraged to participate.
- The tutors are specialists in their subject area, and will change according to the module being followed at the time.
- A project supervisor works with students undertaking the project in the final year of the MSc.

- An LSHTM programme-specific Student Handbook, available on the LSHTM Moodle site, provides guidance on all aspects of the programme. It includes background information about the programme, advice on getting started, studying as a distance learner and organising study time, a description of the resources and programme materials available and how to access them, networking and support issues, procedures for assessment and examinations (including programme deadlines).
- Students are encouraged to exchange ideas with other students on the programme and to organize mutual support via email or other forms of communication. An online discussion forum 'Student Cafe' is available within the LSHTM Moodle site which is accessible to students only, while individual contact details can be made available through the Student Network Directory (subject to student consent). This contains contact details of other students on the course so students can build up their own network if they wish (for example, to organise study groups).

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 University of London federation members. 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 federation member. 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](#).

Qualification standards

All University of London qualifications have to align with the [Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies](#) to assure appropriate standards for each qualification. In addition, every programme that is developed by a federation member of the University of London (or a consortium with representation by more than one federation member) 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 qualifications 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. Registered students are also able to feedback to LSHTM through annual module surveys, the results of which are also considered by the programme team and principal committees. 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. The Epi programme also recruits student representatives. 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.

After graduation

Further study

Successful completion of the programme may allow students to progress to a higher-level award in the subject area.

Graduate employment routes

The programmes will be relevant for those planning careers in epidemiological research; public health and community medicine; epidemiological field studies; disease surveillance units; drug/vaccine manufacturers; or disease control in governmental, NGO or donor institutions. It is also of interest to those who require an understanding of epidemiology, such as medical journalists and scientific officers in government and industry.

The Alumni Community

Upon finishing a course of study, graduates automatically become members 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](#).

The London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine also welcomes former students to its [alumni association](#) and this is [free to join](#).

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