



**UNIVERSITY
OF LONDON**

Programme Specification 2025–2026

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: 31 January 2025

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.

For queries 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.

Prerequisite: A course that must either be passed in a previous examination or be taken in the same examination period as the course for which they are prerequisite.

Key revisions made

Programme specifications are revised annually. The quality committee of Birkbeck, University of London, 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 2025-2026

Internet access and computer specification – updated to reflect minimum computer requirements.

Programme title and qualifications

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.

The Diploma of Higher Education and the Certificate of Higher Education are classified on a Pass (Pass, Pass with Merit or Pass with Distinction) or Fail basis.

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. Students may not request a lower intermediate qualification if studying on a higher qualification (except as an exit qualification) or accumulate these qualifications as they progress from lower to higher qualifications.

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 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* [PY1020] course may be studied on a stand-alone basis without being registered on the CertHE, DipHE or BSc. Students who take *Introduction to philosophy* as a stand-alone Individual course and pass with a mark of 50% or more, may be considered for transfer to the CertHE and may be credited with the pass provided that the application is made within three years of the completion of the course.

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 (compulsory)

Diploma of Higher Education

The Diploma of Higher Education consists of eight 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 minimum periods of registration from a student's effective date of registration, are:

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

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

See the [General Regulations](#) for the maximum periods of registration for these qualifications.

Students will retain the period of registration initially given to them on registration if the maximum registration period for their qualification changes during their studies.

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, before entry onto this programme of study. Where the prior learning covered a similar syllabus to a module/course on the University of London programme, credit will be awarded as if the student 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 be granted recognition of prior learning (RPL) for up to four FHEQ level 4 courses. Recognition of prior learning will not be considered for level 5 and 6 courses. RPL is not permitted for CertHE and DipHE students.

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 within [General entry requirements](#) section.

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:

- Satisfy our General Entrance requirements - have passed qualifications that satisfy category G in the [General entry requirements](#) section of the course webpage; and
- satisfy English language requirements.

Entrance requirements for Certificates of Higher Education and Individual Courses (*Introduction to philosophy*):

Age:

Applicants should check programme requirements which are given under [Entry 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](#). All teaching is in English. Therefore, students will need to have the required level of written and spoken English to cope with their studies right from the start.

Additional information on English language proficiency tests is 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 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 their programme of study). Depending on the security settings for each assessment, students may be required to have full administrator rights on their 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 they own but not to one provided by their employer, for example.

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

- Windows 10 and 11 on 64-bit platforms
- MacOS Big Sur (version 11) and higher
- CPUs newer than 2011 (Intel Sandy Bridge (Core i3, i5 and i7 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 live video

Minimum device requirements are subject to change and older operating systems may become obsolete over time.

And the following applications installed:

- a word processor that accepts Microsoft Word formats (.doc and .docx)
- a PDF reader (e.g. Adobe)
- software for playing mp3 and mp4 files.

Some programmes may have additional requirements. Where this is the case, you will find information on our programme pages. Where applicable, you will be provided with any additional requirements for your assessment platform in advance of your assessment.

Certain services **will** require a mobile device for Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA). This is a key security feature that adds an extra layer of protection for your account and data, requiring two or more steps to verify your identity when logging in. This may include accepting a sign-in notification on your smartphone or entering a unique code sent via SMS or phone call to your mobile device. It is your responsibility to ensure that your mobile device meets the specified requirements for MFA.

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.

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 assessments, 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. Each academic year, an online seminar consisting of a moderated discussion forum runs throughout the term for each Level 4 course. Students have the option of submitting practice essays for Level 4 courses 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 and VLE. 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.

For each course, students will be assessed by an 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 information, 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.

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

Assessment methods

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.

An examination is defined as an element of assessment that takes place in a controlled environment. Students will be given details of how the courses on their programme are assessed, the specific environment or location that is permitted and the time allowed for the assessment.

All assessments are submitted online via a University of London platform. Students must ensure that their device is kept up to date and complies with [University Computer Requirements](#).

Online examinations are proctored remotely except for students who study at a Recognised Teaching Centres for which examinations are normally held at established examination centres worldwide.

Please refer to the fees schedule for information about fees payable to examination centres (if applicable to the programme of study) and for the examination entry and submission.

The written examinations take place on one occasion each year, normally commencing in May. All examinations take place on the same dates and at specific times in line with the published timetables.

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

See [General Regulations](#) Rules for taking written examinations.

Individual course on a stand-alone basis

Students registered on a stand-alone individual course will be examined in the same way as students studying for a qualification. Students will be formally assessed in the credit bearing *Introduction to philosophy* course through a two-hour unseen written examination.

If taken on a stand-alone basis, the pass mark for the *Introduction to philosophy* course is 40% and students are permitted a maximum of two attempts at the course. Note a pass mark of 50% for the *Introduction to philosophy* course is required to satisfy entry requirement for the CertHE Philosophy.

See the [Programme Regulations](#) for specific information regarding assessment for the stand-alone individual course.

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.
- University of London Careers Service – offers tailored careers and employability support to students whatever their course, wherever they are studying, and whether they are starting, developing, or changing their career. Support includes webinars led by careers consultants, employer and alumni panel events and a range of online careers resources.
- 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.
- [Programme Handbook](#): This tells students how to access available resources and assessment and examinations procedures.
- [Programme Regulations](#).
- 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 online 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 Assurance Schedules, Guidelines for](#)

[Examinations](#), [General Regulations](#) and, for each programme, programme specific regulations.

Awards standards

All University of London qualifications must comply with the Office for Students' (OfS) [Conditions of Registration](#) relating to quality and standards, which includes condition B5 ([sector-recognised standards](#)). This is to ensure appropriate standards for each qualification. In addition, every online and distance learning 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 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 performance, progression and completion statistics;
- 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 continues to provide a good student experience.

Enhancements 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 year, 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.

After graduation

Further study

Successful completion of the programme can allow students to progress to a higher-level qualification in both the subject area and potentially many other subject areas.

Graduate employment routes

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](#)