



UNIVERSITY
OF LONDON

Programme Regulations 2022–2023

Philosophy

BA
Diploma of Higher Education
Certificate of Higher Education

Important document – please read
This document contains important
information that governs your
registration, assessment and
programme of study



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Important information regarding the Programme Regulations

Last revised: 22 March 2022

As a student registered with the University of London you are governed by the current General Regulations and Programme Regulations associated with your programme of study.

These Programme Regulations are designed and developed by Birkbeck, University of London which is responsible for the academic direction of the programme. The regulations take account of any associated arrangements at Birkbeck. Programme Regulations, together with the [Programme Handbook](#), will provide the detailed rules and guidance for your programme of study.

In addition to Programme Regulations, you will have to abide by the [General Regulations](#). These regulations apply to all students registered for a programme of study with the University of London and provide the rules governing registration and assessment on all programmes; they also indicate what you may expect on completion of your programme of study and how you may pursue a complaint, should that be necessary. Programme Regulations should be read in conjunction with the General Regulations.

The relevant General Regulations and the Programme Regulations relating to your registration with us are for the current year and not in the year in which you initially registered.

On all matters where the regulations are to be interpreted, or are silent, our decision will be final.

Further information about your programme of study is outlined in the Programme Specification which is available on the relevant [Courses page](#) of the website. The Programme Specification gives a broad overview of the structure and content of the programme as well as the learning outcomes students will achieve as they progress.

Terminology

For the Philosophy programme, you should note the following terminology:

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.

To note:

Throughout the Regulations, 'we' 'us' and 'our' mean the University of London; 'you' and 'your' mean the student, or where applicable, all students.

Significant changes made to the programme regulations 2022-2023

Regulation 5.4 has been updated to reflect that the submission deadline for the Dissertation proposal has been changed from 15 October to 15 November, and the submission deadline for the final Dissertation has been changed from 1 May to 1 June.

If you have a query about any of the programme information provided please contact us. You should use the 'ask a question' button in the student portal <https://my.london.ac.uk/>

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.

The University of London continues to work towards supporting the academic progression of all its students. The University also continues to be mindful of the health and wellbeing of its students during this pandemic, whilst protecting the academic standards of its awards.

1 Structure of the qualifications

Qualifications

1.1

The following named qualifications are awarded under the Philosophy programme:

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

Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy (BA)

1.2

The BA consists of 12 courses as follows:

Level 4 courses

The following four courses:

- Introduction to philosophy [PY1020]
- Ethics: historical perspectives [PY1095]
- Epistemology [PY1025]
- Logic [PY1070]

Level 5 courses

Four courses chosen from the following:

- Greek philosophy: Plato and the Pre-Socratics [PY1085]
- Modern philosophy: Descartes, Locke, Berkeley and Hume [PY1065]
- Ethics: contemporary perspectives [PY3115] (Prerequisite: PY1095)
- Metaphysics [PY3075] (Prerequisite: PY1070)
- Methodology: induction, reason and science [PY3035]

Level 6 courses

Three courses chosen from the following:

- Modern philosophy: Spinoza, Leibniz and Kant [PY3125] (Prerequisite: PY1065)
- Greek philosophy: Aristotle [PY3120] (Prerequisite: PY1085)
- Continental philosophy: Hegel, Schopenhauer and Nietzsche [PY3190] (Prerequisite: PY3125)
- Aesthetics [PY3130]
- Philosophy of language [PY3210]
- Philosophy of mind [PY3100]
- Political philosophy [PY3090]

- Philosophy of religion [PY3110]

One compulsory Level 6 course:

- The Dissertation [PY3500]

Diploma of Higher Education in Philosophy (DipHE)

1.3

The DipHE consists of eight courses, as follows:

Level 4 courses

The following four courses:

- Introduction to philosophy [PY1020]
- Ethics: historical perspectives [PY1095]
- Epistemology [PY1025]
- Logic [PY1070]

Level 5 courses

Four courses chosen from the following:

- Greek philosophy: Plato and the Pre-Socratics [PY1085]
- Modern philosophy: Descartes, Locke, Berkeley and Hume [PY1065]
- Ethics: contemporary perspectives [PY3115] (Prerequisite: PY1095)
- Metaphysics [PY3075] (Prerequisite: PY1070)
- Methodology: induction, reason and science [PY3035]

Certificate of Higher Education in Philosophy (CertHE)

1.4

The CertHE consists of four courses, as follows:

Level 4 courses

The following **four** courses:

- Introduction to philosophy [PY1020]
- Ethics: historical perspectives [PY1095]
- Epistemology [PY1025]
- Logic [PY1070]

1.5

Introduction to philosophy [PY1020] is offered as a credit-bearing stand-alone Individual course. If you successfully complete the assessment for the *Introduction to philosophy* course with a mark of 50% or above, you will be considered for transfer to the CertHE.

1.6

You may apply to change your choice of course at any stage in your studies until you enter the examination for that course. If you have entered for an examination, your application will not be considered until after the examination results for that session have been published.

2 Registration

Effective date of registration

2.1

Your effective date of registration will be 30 November in the year that you initially registered. This allows you to sit your first examinations in the following May.

Period of registration

See the [Programme Specification](#) for the minimum and maximum periods of registration applicable to this programme.

2.2

If you take *Introduction to philosophy* [PY1020] as a stand-alone Individual course and then register for the CertHE, DipHE or BA, we will give you a new maximum period of registration for the CertHE, DipHE or BA.

2.3

If you transfer from the CertHE to the DipHE or BA, or DipHE to BA, your period of registration will be effective from your initial date of registration on the CertHE or DipHE, as applicable.

3 Recognition of prior learning

To be read in conjunction with the [General Regulations](#), Section 3.

Recognition of prior learning

3.1

A BA student may apply for recognition of prior learning (RPL) for up to four Level 4 courses. RPL will not be considered for Level 5 and 6 courses. RPL is not permitted for CertHE and DipHE students.

4 Course selection

[Appendix A](#) provides details of the programme structures and course titles.

4.1

The examination for *Introduction to philosophy* [PY1020] must be taken in the year in which you first enter for an examination.

4.2

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.

5 Assessment for the programme

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 refer to Programme Specifications for details on equipment that may be required for alternative assessments.

Assessment methods

5.1

Level 4 and 5 courses are each assessed by one two-hour unseen written examination. Level 6 courses are each assessed by one three-hour unseen written examination (with the exception of the Dissertation).

5.2

The Dissertation course is assessed by a 7,500 word dissertation. Details of the Dissertation arrangements will be given in the Dissertation subject guide.

See the website for the [list of examination centres](#).

Dates for examinations

5.3

Written examinations take place in May each year.

5.4

The Dissertation proposal must be submitted by **15 November** and the final Dissertation must be submitted by **1 June** in the academic year the Dissertation course is being taken. Further details about submission are available on the relevant course forum on the VLE.

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

6 Number of attempts permitted at an examination

6.1

The maximum number of attempts permitted at any examination of the BA, DipHE or CertHE is **three**.

6.2

If taken as an Individual course on a stand-alone basis, the maximum number of attempts permitted at any examination of *Introduction to philosophy* [PY1020] is **two**, provided your registration has not expired.

The Dissertation

6.3

If you do not want to submit your Dissertation in the year in which your proposal was approved, you should contact the Assessments team via the *ask a question* button in the Student Portal. You must

explain the reasons for requesting the deferral and include supporting evidence. If we agree to your request, you must submit the Dissertation the following year. This will count as your first attempt at the assessment.

7 Progression within the programme

See [section 5](#) for method of assessment.

7.1

In any one year, you may normally attempt examinations in a maximum of **four** courses, excluding re-sits. You do not have to be examined every year.

BA degree

7.2

You may not take more than two Level 5 or Level 6 courses until you have passed two Level 4 courses, one of which must be *Introduction to philosophy* [PY1020].

7.3

You may only enter for the Dissertation once you have passed all four courses at Level 4 and a minimum of four courses at Level 5 and/or Level 6.

DipHE

7.4

You may not take more than two Level 5 courses until you have passed two Level 4 courses, one of which must be *Introduction to philosophy* [PY1020].

Progression from the CertHE

7.5

You may progress to the BA or DipHE if:

- you have been awarded the CertHE **or**
- you already satisfy the entrance requirements for the BA/DipHE.

Progression from the DipHE

7.6

You may progress to the BA if:

- you have been awarded the DipHE **or**
- you already satisfy the entrance requirements for the BA.

Transfer from a higher qualification to a lower qualification

7.7

You may not normally transfer your registration from the BA to the DipHE or CertHE, or from the DipHE to the CertHE. Students who for academic or personal reasons are unable to complete the 240 or 360 credits required for the DipHE or BA qualifications may exit with the successful completion of 120 or 240 credits and be awarded a CertHE or DipHE respectively.

Other transfer rules

7.8

If you satisfy the criteria to progress to the BA or DipHE, we will credit you with the courses passed.

7.9

Previous attempts at the examinations for the CertHE or DipHE will count towards the number of attempts permitted at each course of the BA or DipHE, as applicable.

7.10

If you transfer to the BA or DipHE part way through the CertHE on the basis that you satisfy the entrance requirements for the BA/DipHE, we will not normally award you the CertHE, unless as an exit qualification subsequently.

7.11

If you transfer to the BA part way through the DipHE on the basis that you satisfy the entrance requirements for the BA, we will not normally award you the DipHE, unless as an exit qualification subsequently.

Transfer from the stand-alone Individual course

7.12

If you take *Introduction to philosophy* [PY1020] as a stand-alone Individual course and pass with a mark of 50% or more, you may apply to transfer to the CertHE. If you wish to transfer to the BA or DipHE, you must submit a new application and comply with the entrance requirements for that qualification.

7.13

If you are permitted to transfer, you may be credited with your pass in *Introduction to philosophy* provided that the application is made within three years of the completion of the course.

8 Schemes of award

The date of award will be 1 August in the year of the last assessment that contributes to the award.

8.1

To obtain the BA with a given classification, you will be required to achieve a final mark within the following ranges:

Grade	Class equivalent
70% and above	First Class Honours
60–69%	Second Class (Upper Division) Honours
50–59%	Second Class (Lower Division) Honours
40–49%	Third Class Honours
0–39%	Fail

8.2

To obtain the CertHE or DipHE with a given grade, you will be required to achieve a final mark within the following ranges:

Mark range	Award grade
70% and above	Pass with Distinction
60–69%	Pass with Merit
40–59%	Pass
0–39%	Fail

8.3

If you can be granted an award, you will **not** be permitted to make any further attempts at any examinations.

8.4

All courses are weighted equally.

BA Philosophy

8.5

You are required to have attempted the examination in a total of twelve courses, which may include accreditation of prior learning for Level 4 courses.

8.6

In order to obtain the BA you must usually pass all twelve courses with a mark of 40% or above. However, you may be compensated for one failed course (excluding the Dissertation) if the mark achieved is between 30–39%.

8.7

You will be awarded a BA in a given class (as above) if:

- a) the majority of the best ten course marks (i.e. six or more) fall into that class and
- b) the average of these ten marks is no lower than that required for the next lower class

In determining the classification of the degree, examiners have complete discretion and will take into consideration the marks for all courses.

8.8

The Board of Examiners may use its discretion to approve the exit qualification of a DipHE to a student registered for the BA who has completed eight courses, or, a CertHE to a student who has completed four courses. The Board must be satisfied that these constitute a coherent programme of study appropriate to the title of the award.

8.9

If you have been awarded accreditation of prior learning (RPL) for any courses at Level 4, the examiners will assess your class of degree entirely upon your performance in the courses in which you have been examined.

DipHE Philosophy

8.10

You are required to pass the examination in a total of **eight** courses with a mark of 40% or above.

8.11

The final mark is determined by an average of all marks obtained for each of the eight courses studied.

8.12

The Board of Examiners may use its discretion to approve the exit qualification of a CertHE to a student registered for the DipHE who has completed four courses provided that the Board is satisfied that these constitute a coherent programme of study appropriate to the title of the award.

CertHE Philosophy

8.13

To be awarded the CertHE Philosophy, you are required to pass the examination in a total of **four** courses with a mark of 40% or above.

8.14

The final mark is determined by an average of all the marks obtained for each of the four courses studied.

Individual course taken on a stand-alone basis

8.15

If taken on a stand-alone basis, the pass mark for the *Introduction to philosophy* course is 40%

Note that a pass mark of 50% for the *Introduction to philosophy* course is required to satisfy [entry requirement](#) for the CertHE Philosophy.

Appendix A – Syllabuses

Level 4 courses

Introduction to philosophy [PY1020]

An introduction to the subject matter and methods of philosophy by means of a study of certain fundamental philosophical problems and texts. In this course, students will be introduced to the methods and content of philosophy by considering, at an elementary level and in a carefully guided way, some of the central problems that arise within the subject. Topics covered include: the problem of free-will and determinism, the nature of the self, the relation of the mind to the body, the nature of knowledge, the ideal of equality, issues raised by portrayals of tragedy, the reality of qualities, and our understanding of moral dilemmas.

Ethics: historical perspectives [PY1095]

An exploration of the history of moral philosophy, including the views of Plato, Aristotle, Hume, Kant and Mill. The works of these philosophers are not merely of historical importance to the development of moral philosophy. They continue to shape contemporary discussion and, even more importantly, they are part of the fabric of our culture. Conceptions of morality that are now widely shared were in large part shaped by these thinkers. This historical background prepares the way for the second of the ethics courses, which deals with contemporary perspectives.

Epistemology [PY1025]

An investigation of the problems of analysing knowledge, and dealing with the challenge of scepticism. Epistemology is sometimes known as the theory of knowledge and, as this name suggests, it is a philosophical enquiry into knowledge. The questions it seeks to answer are: What is knowledge? How do we get it? Are the means we employ to get it defensible? These questions prompt a number of debates. One concerns the conditions that have to be satisfied for it to be true that someone knows something. Enquiry into this problem shows that we need to understand belief and its relation to knowledge; and that we have to be clear about the nature of any justification we have for our knowledge claims. Another debate concerns the adequacy of our ways of getting knowledge. We typically employ reason and perception in this task, but the challenge of scepticism shows that the uses we make of them involve a number of serious difficulties. A satisfactory account of knowledge has to address all these matters.

Logic [PY1070]

The content of this course is sometimes called either 'philosophical logic' or 'philosophy of logic'. The topics studied are closely related, and count among the most fundamental and challenging in philosophy. Some grounding in them is essential for an appreciation of what is discussed in all other branches of philosophy, and it is for this reason that logic is studied early on. Logic is the study of the central notions that figure in our most general attempts to understand reasoning. Included here are: validity, truth, necessity, identity, naming and reference, existence, conditionals and counterfactual conditionals, as well as a number of issues raised by the relationship of formal logic to natural language. (Note: it is advised that students acquire some background in elementary formal logic either whilst doing this course, or before attempting it.)

Level 5 courses

Greek philosophy: Plato and the Pre-Socratics [PY1085]

The interpretation of the extant fragments of Pre-Socratic philosophy and a selection of Plato's dialogues, including (but not limited to) *The Republic*, *Symposium*, *Theatetus*, *Phaedo*, *Philebus* and *Parmenides*. The course focuses on the work of the predecessors of Plato – collectively known as the pre-Socratics – as well as on the main dialogues of Plato. It has been said that all of philosophy is a series of footnotes to Plato. While this is certainly an exaggeration, it points to the fundamental importance to philosophy of its history, and in particular of the part played in that history by Plato.

Modern philosophy: Descartes, Locke, Berkeley and Hume [PY1065]

Study of the main metaphysical, logical and epistemological views of Descartes, Locke, Berkeley and Hume. The philosophers Locke, Berkeley and Hume are generally reckoned to be the main representatives of the empiricist tradition, whereas Descartes is seen as one of the forerunners of the rationalist school. However, the work of the empiricists can be seen as a reaction – in part – to Descartes and rationalism generally, so this first subject in modern philosophy begins with Descartes. The label 'modern' is intended as a contrast to 'ancient', (i.e. Plato, the Pre-Socratics and Aristotle, among others). It is generally understood as covering the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries – a period in which there was a decisive break with ancient philosophy.

Ethics: contemporary perspectives [PY3115]

Prerequisite: **Ethics: historical perspectives** must be taken at the same time or already have been passed.

An investigation of the central questions in moral philosophy including such issues as: the metaphysical status of moral value, morality and truth, theories of the good, moral relativism and moral conflict, consequentialism and moral accountability. Ethics or moral philosophy is the inquiry into the nature of moral value. It is concerned with questions about goodness, right and wrong, the virtues and the nature of the worthwhile life. One way into a consideration of moral philosophy is to read the works of those who have made substantial contributions to our understanding of moral questions: Plato, Aristotle, Hume, Kant, Mill and others. (This is the subject matter of the other course in ethics). But a historical approach needs to be complemented by the more direct consideration of questions about virtue, action, consequences, rights, duties, the 'fact-value' distinction, the nature of moral truth, the universalisability of moral principles, and much besides. These sorts of issue form the basis of this course.

Metaphysics [PY3075]

Prerequisite: **Logic** must be taken at the same time or already have been passed.

An exploration of the main questions of metaphysics, including those raised by the nature of substance, problems of identity and individuation, as well as issues involving time, causation and universals. Specific metaphysical questions are so various and important that discussion of some of them has come to form separate branches of philosophy, for example *Philosophy of mind* and *Philosophy of religion*, both of which are in the list of optional courses. However, the central and more general questions of existence and reality remain part of this course, and give rise to more specific ones that are also studied, namely: What is time? Are particulars more basic than events? Do human beings have free will? What is causality? Are there universals? Does the world exist independently of our knowledge of it?

Methodology: induction, reason and science [PY3035]

Prerequisite: Epistemology must be taken at the same time or already have been passed.

An investigation of explanation generally, and in science, as well as the problems of induction and confirmation. Methodology is a continuation of epistemology in a particular direction: it is, in part, an enquiry into the nature of the reasoning and methods used in investigation of the natural and social world. It includes, in fact, elementary philosophy of science, and it considers questions about inductive reasoning, probability, explanation, evidence, 'laws of nature' and the reality of 'theoretical entities' such as elementary particles and fields. This course provides a groundwork which is both of intrinsic interest and great value to inquiry in other fields of philosophy.

Level 6 courses

Modern philosophy: Spinoza, Leibniz and Kant [PY3125]

Prerequisite: Modern philosophy: Descartes, Locke, Berkeley and Hume must be taken at the same time or already have been passed.

Study of the main metaphysical, logical and epistemological views of Spinoza, Leibniz and Kant. All three are generally agreed to be thinkers of the front rank, and each is difficult, though in different ways. This course focuses on the rationalist tradition in modern philosophy, and begins the study of Kant. As with the other courses in modern philosophy, this one is concerned primarily with the epistemological and metaphysical views of these thinkers.

Greek philosophy: Aristotle [PY3120]

Prerequisite: Greek philosophy: the Pre-Socratics and Plato must be taken at the same time or already have been passed.

The study of the broadly metaphysical, logical and epistemological doctrines of Aristotle. Works covered include: *Physics*, *On God*, *De Anima (On the Soul)*, *Categories* and *Posterior Analytics and Metaphysics*. More than any other single philosopher, Aristotle has shaped the development of western philosophical thinking, whether because of agreement and development of his ideas, or in opposition to them. The emphasis in this course will be on Aristotle's logical, epistemological and metaphysical views; his ethical writings form part of the subject on historical perspectives on ethics.

Continental philosophy: Hegel, Schopenhauer and Nietzsche [PY3190]

Prerequisite: Modern philosophy: Spinoza, Leibniz and Kant must be taken at the same time or already have been passed.

This course covers the main doctrines of Hegel and two post-Hegelian nineteenth-century German philosophers: Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. It is advisable to also have knowledge of Kant's philosophy when studying this course. Despite its difficulty, Hegel's philosophy has been highly influential, notwithstanding the fact that there have always been many detractors. Notable among them is Schopenhauer who took every opportunity to abuse Hegel, describing his philosophy as obscurantist. Schopenhauer's philosophy left an influential legacy and not just within the limits of academia. His aesthetic theory has inspired many artists, particularly musicians, for example, Wagner. Within philosophy itself, the influence Schopenhauer had on Nietzsche is perhaps the most far reaching. Nietzsche suffered from lack of recognition during his lifetime. Nazi propagandists made much of his sayings which, when taken out of context and without giving due regard to Nietzsche's predilection for hyperbole and excess, did lend themselves readily to gross distortion and exploitation.

Aesthetics [PY3130]

An investigation of problems such as: the nature and value of art, aesthetic judgement, representation, expression and interpretation. Included will be a historical approach to these issues involving writers such as Plato, Aristotle, Kant, Nietzsche and Collingwood. Wide reading in the history of aesthetics is necessary for a proper approach to the course. Issues in contemporary aesthetics are illuminated by their treatment throughout history, and the understanding and assessment of the views of past thinkers is facilitated by reflection on the problems they deal with. Aesthetics, done properly, is as hard and as rewarding as any branch of philosophy. It is philosophy turning its attention to the nature of aesthetic experience and judgement, and to questions about art, the different art forms, how they relate to the world and to the mind, and what value they may have.

Philosophy of language [PY3210]

An exploration of the notion of meaning as well as an investigation into the more detailed problems arising from study of natural language. Included are topics such as metaphor, reference and the nature of rules and language. Philosophy of language is organised around general questions of language and meaning. The nature of language has long been an obsession of philosophers. More recently it has also become the focus of empirical investigation in linguistics. The course considers general methodological considerations about meaning and reference: what form should a theory of meaning take; what does knowledge of meaning consist of; what kinds of facts are there about meaning? Certain figures have dominated discussion of language in the twentieth century - Frege, Russell, Wittgenstein, Quine, Grice, Davidson and Chomsky. In addition to studying the work of these philosophers, students will have the opportunity to look at particular problems concerning indexical expressions; proper names; the nature of definite descriptions; pronouns and quantified phrases in natural language; indirect contexts and propositional attitude ascriptions; adverbs, adjectives and metaphor.

Philosophy of mind [PY3100]

This course is concerned with metaphysical and epistemological issues that arise from reflecting on the mind. It explores the problems raised by intentionality, consciousness and action. Issues covered include: the relationship of the mind to the physical world, the philosophy of psychology, and the understanding of subjectivity and the nature of human action. Study of logic, metaphysics, epistemology and methodology also contribute to this course.

Political philosophy [PY3090]

The study of the history of political philosophy as well as an investigation of contemporary issues. Included in the historical part of the course are works by Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Hegel, Marx and Mill. Contemporary issues involve topics such as political authority and the state, democracy, liberalism, distributive justice and markets and capitalism. Throughout the history of Western philosophy, those figures whose thought has engaged with ethical problems have been equally concerned with political philosophy and vice versa. Just as the form of ethical theories has varied greatly over the last 2,000 years, so too have the forms that questions and answers take within political philosophy. It is, therefore, very important to address the problems of political philosophy within both a historical and an ethical framework.

Philosophy of religion [PY3110]

Philosophy of religion is not a course that is easily demarcated in respect of its scope and point. That said, philosophy of religion is commonly understood to be the philosophical scrutiny of the claims of religious believers and those made on behalf of religious traditions. The focus of study is principally on the three monotheistic traditions of the West: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Those coming to the subject for the first time need to be aware that it demands competence in many of the central areas of philosophy: metaphysics, philosophical logic, epistemology and ethics. In this

respect, the course provides a student with an opportunity to apply their general philosophical acumen to a body of important questions concerning theism. Among the questions raised are: the existence of God; the coherence of theism; the compatibility of divine omniscience and human freedom; the problem of evil; and immortality.

Dissertation [PY3500]

Prerequisite: You may only enter for the Dissertation once you have passed all four courses at Level 4 and a minimum of four courses at Level 5 and/or Level 6.

A dissertation of 7,500 words on a topic to be negotiated with a member of the staff at Birkbeck, University of London. Students will receive feedback on a one-page outline (consisting of a working title, a summary of the main sections of the dissertation, and a short bibliography), and comments on a complete drafts, if required.

A dissertation can be on any topic in philosophy that falls within the area of competence of a member of the Department. Producing one allows students the chance to call on their accumulated knowledge of the subject. Most students feel that this module rounds off their degree, giving them a real sense of achievement.

Appendix B – Assessment Criteria

Examinations and dissertations are assessed using the following criteria (not in order of importance):

- Relevance of answer to question set.
- Coverage of answer: appropriate range of facts, ideas and sources.
- Accuracy of information.
- Structure and organisation of argument.
- Quality of analysis, argumentation and critical evaluation.
- Quality of expression and presentation.
- Display of capacity for independent thought.

These criteria are used to categorise answers to exam questions and dissertations into the following classes.

Grade	Class equivalent	Assessment criteria
80% or more	First Class Honours	An outstanding answer in all or virtually all areas, of a calibre beyond what is normally expected at undergraduate level.
70–79%	First Class Honours	An excellent answer in all or nearly all areas; showing a high degree of competence where excellence is not achieved.
60–69%	Second Class (Upper Division) Honours	A good answer. Very competent in some areas, or showing moderate competence in some and excellence in others.
50–59%	Second Class (Lower Division) Honours	A satisfactory answer, competent in some of the criteria but weak in others.
40–49%	Third Class Honours	An answer that meets the minimum criteria to pass, showing some awareness of issues raised by the question and knowledge of relevant material, but with weak performance on most of the criteria.
30–39%	Potential Compensated Fail	The answer is only slightly below the pass standard and the examiners believe that the wider consequences of a fail need to be further examined.
20–29%	Fail	Inadequate answer in all areas, displaying very little knowledge or understanding
0–19%	Fail	Totally inadequate answer in all areas, displaying scant evidence of understanding or knowledge.