

Royal Holloway, University of London
Course specification for a postgraduate award
MA EUROPEAN PHILOSOPHY (2745) AND MA POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY (2748)

Section 1 – Introduction to your course

This course specification is a formal document, which provides a summary of the main features of your course and the learning outcomes that you might reasonably be expected to achieve and demonstrate if you take full advantage of the learning opportunities that are provided. Further information is contained in the College prospectus, and in various handbooks, all of which you will be able to access online. Alternatively, further information on the College's academic regulations and policies can be found [here](#). Further information on the College's Admissions Policy can be found [here](#).

The course is delivered over one year of full-time study (52 weeks) or up to five years of part-time study (260 weeks). On successful completion of the course a student should have an understanding of the area of the MA at a level appropriate for a postgraduate qualification. Whilst being a self-contained degree in its own right, the course provides suitable and recognised qualifications for entry to PhD study in the same or a closely related field.

While Royal Holloway keeps all the information made available under review, courses and the availability of individual modules, especially optional modules are necessarily subject to change at any time, and you are therefore advised to seek confirmation of any factors which might affect your decision to follow a specific course. In turn, Royal Holloway will inform you as soon as is practicable of any significant changes which might affect your studies.

The following is a brief description for some of the most important terminology for understanding the content of this document:

Degree course – Also referred to as 'programme', this term refers to the qualification you will be awarded upon successful completion of your studies. 'Courses' were formerly known as 'programmes' at Royal Holloway.

Module – This refers to the credits you will study each year to complete your degree course. Postgraduate taught degrees at Royal Holloway comprise 180 credits. On some degree courses a certain number of optional modules must be passed for a particular degree title. 'Modules' were formerly known as 'course units' at Royal Holloway.

Section 2 – Course details			
Date of specification update	May 2024	Location of study	Egham
Course award and title	MA European Philosophy MA Political Philosophy	Level of study	Postgraduate
Course code	2745 2748	Year of entry	2026/27
Awarding body	Royal Holloway, University of London		
Department or school	Politics, International Relations, and Philosophy	Other departments or schools involved in teaching the course	
Mode(s) of attendance	Full time and part time	Duration of the course	One year (52 weeks) full-time Two to five years (104 - 260 weeks) part-time
Accrediting Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body requirement(s)	N/A		
Link to Coursefinder for further information:	https://www.royalholloway.ac.uk/studying-here/	For queries on admissions:	https://royalholloway.ac.uk/applicationquery

Section 3 – Degree course structure				
3.1 Mandatory module information				
The following table summarises the mandatory modules which students must take in each year of study				
Module code	Module title	Credits	FHEQ level	Module status (Mandatory Condonable MC or Mandatory Non-Condonable MNC)
PY5000	Advanced Topics in Philosophy I	30	7	MC
PY5001	MA Philosophy Dissertation	60	7	MC
PY5005	Advanced Topics in Philosophy II	30	7	MC
<p>This table sets out the most important information for the mandatory modules on your degree course. These modules are central to achieving your learning outcomes, so they are compulsory, and all students on your degree course will be required to take them. You will be automatically registered for these modules each year. Mandatory modules fall into two categories: 'condonable' or 'non-condonable'.</p> <p>In the case of mandatory 'non-condonable' (MNC) modules, you must pass the module before you can proceed to the next year of your course, or to successfully graduate with a particular degree title. In the case of mandatory 'condonable' (MC) modules, these must be taken but you can still progress or graduate even if you do not pass them. Please note that although Royal Holloway will keep changes to a minimum, changes to your degree course may be made where reasonable and necessary due to unexpected events. For example, where requirements of relevant Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Bodies have changed and course requirements must change accordingly, or where changes are deemed necessary on the basis of student feedback and/or the advice of external advisors, to enhance academic provision.</p>				
3.2 Optional modules				
<p>In addition to mandatory modules, there may be a number of optional modules available during the course of your degree. Although Royal Holloway will keep changes to a minimum, new options may be offered, or existing ones may be withdrawn. For example, where reasonable and necessary due to unexpected events, where requirements of relevant Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs) have changed and course requirements must change accordingly, or where changes are deemed necessary on the basis of student feedback and/or the advice of External Advisors, to enhance academic provision. There may be additional requirements around option selection; please contact the Department for further information.</p>				

European Philosophy

In addition to the mandatory modules outlined above, students must take:

- i) Two modules (30 credits) from the following list:
 - PY5002 The European Philosophical Trajectory: from Kant to the Present (15 credits)
 - PY5003 Twentieth Century French Thought (15 credits)
 - PR5418 Contemporary Continental Political Theory (15 credits)
- ii) 30 credits of optional modules

Political Philosophy

In addition to the mandatory modules outline above, students must take:

- i) Two modules (30 credits) from the following list:
 - PR5416 – Political Concepts (15 credits)
 - PR5418 – Contemporary Continental Political Theory (15 credits)
 - PR5936 – Anglo American Political Theory (15 credits)
- ii) 30 credits of optional modules.

Section 4 - Progressing through each year of your degree course

For further information on the progression and award requirements for your degree, please refer to Royal Holloway's [Academic Regulations](#).

Progression throughout the year/s is monitored through performance in summative or formative coursework assignments. Please note that if you hold a Student Visa and you choose to leave (or are required to leave because of non-progression) or complete early (before the course end date stated on your CAS), then this will be reported to UKVI.

All postgraduate taught students are required to take and pass the non-credit bearing Moodle-based Academic Integrity module SS1001 to be awarded. The pass mark for the module assessment is stated in the on-line Academic Integrity Moodle module. Students may attempt the assessment as often as they wish with no penalties or capping. Students who otherwise meet the requirements for award as stipulated in the [Academic Taught Regulations](#) but fail to pass the Moodle-based Academic Integrity module will not be awarded.

Part-time course structure

The course can be taken part-time over two to five years, beginning in September of year one. Part-time students studying over two years normally take PY5000, an option from (i) and (ii) in their first year, and the remaining option from (i), (ii), and PY5001 in their second year.

Section 5 – Educational aims of the course

The aims of the MA European Philosophy stream are:

- to give students knowledge of some of the major theoretical positions that define the contemporary landscape of European philosophy.
- to familiarise students with the different approaches to philosophy found in the European tradition.
- to enable students to gain knowledge of the core texts and issues which form the framework for contemporary philosophical research.
- to encourage an awareness of the connections between European philosophy and other disciplines and practices in the sciences and arts
- to provide training in research techniques in the field of study
- to foster an independent learning ability required for continuing professional development.
- to develop key communications, IT, and management skills relevant for postgraduate work to develop advanced writing skills.

The aims of the MA Political Philosophy stream are:

- to give students knowledge of the main political implications of modern philosophy.
- to familiarise students with methods involved in both analytical and European approaches to political philosophy.
- to enable students to gain knowledge of the core texts and issues which form the framework for contemporary philosophical research.
- to encourage an awareness of similarities and differences between analytical and European traditions of political philosophy.
- to provide training in research techniques in the field of study.
- to foster an independent learning ability required for continuing professional development.
- to develop key communications, IT, and management skills relevant for postgraduate work.
- to develop advanced writing skills.

Section 6 - Course learning outcomes		
In general terms, the courses provide opportunities for students to develop and demonstrate the following learning outcomes. (<i>Categories – Knowledge and understanding (K), Skills and other attributes (S), and Transferable skills (*)</i>)		
Theme	Course Learning Outcome	Level 7
MA European Philosophy		
Philosophical knowledge, understanding and skills	1.1. Demonstrate a sound knowledge and critical understanding of key concepts and contemporary debates within subfields of philosophy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and discuss the major concepts in a philosophical theory and their role in the justification of that theory. Recognise and evaluate a variety of different approaches one can take to philosophical problems. Discuss and evaluate approaches to some central philosophical problems that are at the forefront of philosophical research.
	1.2. Demonstrate advanced knowledge and critical understanding of the field of European philosophy, including of understanding of key concepts, philosophical debates and developments, as well as knowledge of key thinkers and texts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrate advanced knowledge of key thinkers and texts in modern and contemporary European political philosophy. Engage in reasoned critical reflection of the theories articulated by key European political thinkers and argue for alternative positions in relation to the political and social issues at stake. Demonstrate familiarity with methods involved in both analytical and hermeneutic approaches to modern philosophy. Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of canonical texts in the European tradition of philosophy. Describe and critically evaluate the concepts and theories of several key twentieth century French philosophers. Explain why twentieth century French thought rejects classical philosophical modes of reasoning. Compare the strengths and limitations of approaches to philosophy developed in twentieth century France.
	1.3. Demonstrate advanced knowledge and critical understanding of other subjects in philosophy and political theory based on the selection of option modules within the degree course.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrate an advanced knowledge of the key philosophical ideas and concepts and the debates surrounding them; Engage in analysis and critical engagement with philosophical and theoretical ideas and concepts; Argue for alternative positions in relation to these concepts, showing awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of different philosophical positions.
Generic Skills	2.1. Demonstrate the attainment of academic and scholarly skills applicable to everyday practical and workplace contexts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carry out independent research on an advanced topic relevant to contemporary analytic and/or European philosophy. Advance their own thesis using philosophical analysis and argumentation appropriate to MA-level study. Demonstrate understanding of and ability to engage critically with a field of literature appropriate to their area of research.
	2.2. Demonstrate the attainment of academic and scholarly skills applicable to everyday practical and workplace contexts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicate clearly and concisely; Synthesize material from a range of primary and secondary sources; Deploy research, evidence, and argumentation to advance the one's own lines of criticism and argument; Assess the merits of contrasting philosophical theories, explanations, and arguments.

MA Political Philosophy		
Philosophical knowledge, understanding and skills	Demonstrate a sound knowledge and critical understanding of key concepts and contemporary debates within subfields of philosophy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and discuss the major concepts in a philosophical theory and their role in the justification of that theory. Recognise and evaluate a variety of different approaches one can take to philosophical problems. Discuss and evaluate approaches to some central philosophical problems that are at the forefront of philosophical research.
	Demonstrate advanced knowledge and critical understanding of the field of political philosophy, including of understanding of key concepts, philosophical debates and developments, as well as knowledge of key thinkers and texts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrate advanced knowledge of key contemporary political concepts and the debates surrounding them and their use. Engage in analysis and argue for alternative positions in relation to key contemporary political concepts. Demonstrate advanced knowledge of key thinkers and texts in modern and contemporary European political philosophy. Engage in reasoned critical reflection of the theories articulated by key European political thinkers and argue for alternative positions in relation to the political and social issues at stake. Demonstrate substantive knowledge of theoretical concepts and political thinkers in contemporary Anglo-American political thought. Identify and discuss the major concepts and the forms of theory generated by them in contemporary Anglo-American political thought and engage in critical reflection on these theories and their consequences when considering politics, ethics, and social action.
	Demonstrate advanced knowledge and critical understanding of other subjects in philosophy and political theory based on the selection of option modules within the degree course	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In relation to the fields of philosophy and political theory pursued in accordance with their option choices students will be able to: Demonstrate an advanced knowledge of the key philosophical ideas and concepts and the debates surrounding them; Engage in analysis and critical engagement with philosophical and theoretical ideas and concepts; Argue for alternative positions in relation to these concepts, showing awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of different philosophical positions.
Generic skills	Demonstrate the attainment of academic and scholarly skills applicable to everyday practical and workplace contexts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carry out independent research on an advanced topic relevant to contemporary analytic and/or European philosophy. Advance their own thesis using philosophical analysis and argumentation appropriate to MA-level study. Demonstrate understanding of and ability to engage critically with a field of literature appropriate to their area of research.
	Demonstrate the attainment of academic and scholarly skills applicable to everyday practical and workplace contexts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicate clearly and concisely; Synthesize material from a range of primary and secondary sources; Deploy research, evidence, and argumentation to advance the one's own lines of criticism and argument; Assess the merits of contrasting philosophical theories, explanations, and arguments.

Section 7 - Teaching, learning and assessment

Teaching and learning is mostly by means of seminar discussions, oral presentations, guided independent research, guided independent study, coursework essays, and a dissertation. The basic strategies are to nurture the interest and enthusiasm of the students for the field, to develop the students' critical and communication skills and to develop critical, research and creative skills. Assessment of knowledge and understanding is typically by coursework essays, and a dissertation.

Contact hours come in various forms and may take the form of time spent with a member of staff in a lecture or seminar with other students. Contact hours may also be laboratory or, studio-based sessions, project supervision with a member of staff, or discussion through a virtual learning environment (VLE). These contact hours may be with a lecturer or teaching assistant, but they may also be with a technician, or specialist support staff.

The way in which each module on your degree course is assessed will also vary. Assessments designated as 'summative' will receive a mark which will count towards your overall mark for the module, and potentially your degree classification, depending on your year of study. On successful completion of the module, you will gain the credits listed.

More detailed information on modules, including teaching and learning methods, and methods of assessment, can be found via the online [Royal Holloway Curriculum Catalogue](#). The accuracy of the information contained in this document is reviewed regularly by the university and may also be checked routinely by external agencies.

Section 8 – Additional costs

There are no single associated costs greater than £50 per item on this degree course.

These estimated costs relate to studying this particular degree course at Royal Holloway. General costs such as accommodation, food, books and other learning materials and printing etc., have not been included, but further information is available on our website.

Section 9 – Indicators of quality and standards

QAA Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) Level

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Your course is designed in accordance with the FHEQ to ensure your qualification is awarded on the basis of nationally established standards of achievement, for both outcomes and attainment. The qualification descriptors within the FHEQ set out the generic outcomes and attributes expected for the award of individual qualifications. The qualification descriptors contained in the FHEQ exemplify the outcomes and attributes expected of learning that results in the award of higher education qualifications. These outcomes represent the integration of various learning experiences resulting from designated and coherent courses of study.

QAA Subject benchmark statement(s)	http://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code/subject-benchmark-statements
Subject benchmark statements provide a means for the academic community to describe the nature and characteristics of courses in a specific subject or subject area. They also represent general expectations about standards for the award of qualifications at a given level in terms of the attributes and capabilities that those possessing qualifications should have demonstrated.	

Section 10– Intermediate exit awards (where available)		
You may be eligible for an intermediate exit award if you complete part of the course as detailed in this document. Any additional criteria (e.g. mandatory modules, credit requirements) for intermediate awards is outlined in the sections below.		
Award	Criteria	Awarding body
PG Diploma	Passes in at least 120 credits, with fails of between 40% to 49% for up to 30 credits condonable (with the exception of any course specific requirements).	Royal Holloway and Bedford New College
PG Certificate	Passes in at least 60 credits with no condonable fails	Royal Holloway and Bedford New College