

PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION

This document describes the **Master of Arts in Philosophy (by Research)**. This specification is valid for new entrants from **September 2011**.

The degree programme aims to:

- provide training in the methodologies and techniques needed for research leading to MPhil/PhD
- offer an independent course of study at Masters level in an attractive form which will permit students to do Masters work who would be unable to attend a taught MA. This might include, for example, teachers and other professionals who are in full-time work, or those who live too far away from College regularly to attend.
- widen access to differing kinds of students, offer students the chance to pursue a course of studies that fits in with the demands of their work, and with their personal aspirations
- examine critically current knowledge, and the essential concepts and theories that inform advanced study in philosophy, and the humanities and social and natural sciences
- provide the opportunity for advanced study of specialised topics
- examine critically current techniques of enquiry and research in philosophy, and the humanities and social and natural sciences
- foster the ability to learn independently, whether for further research or for personal intellectual development
- develop the written and oral presentation skills needed for effective communication of research findings at postgraduate level

The programme is delivered over one year of full-time study (52 weeks) or two years of part-time study (104 weeks).

Further information

[Learning outcomes](#)

[Teaching, learning and assessment](#)

[Details of the programme structure\(s\)](#)

[Award Requirements](#)

[Student support and guidance](#)

[Admission requirements](#)

[Further learning and career opportunities](#)

[Indicators of quality and standards](#)

[List of programmes, with details of awards, degree titles, accreditation and teaching arrangements](#)

This document provides a summary of the main features of the programme(s), and of the outcomes which a student might reasonably be expected to achieve if full advantage is taken of the learning opportunities provided. Further information is contained in the College prospectus, the College Regulations and in various handbooks issued to students upon arrival. Whilst Royal Holloway keeps all its information for prospective applicants and students under review, programmes and the availability of individual courses are necessarily subject to change at any time, and prospective applicants are therefore advised to seek confirmation of any factors which might affect their decision to follow a specific programme. In turn, Royal Holloway will inform applicants and students as soon as is practicable of any substantial changes which might affect their studies.

Learning outcomes

Teaching and learning in the MA by Research are intended to be very closely related to the research interests of the staff involved in the Philosophy programme. Upon successful completion of the programme, students should have an understanding of the field at a level appropriate for a postgraduate qualification.

Knowledge and Understanding

The programme is designed to allow students to develop and demonstrate knowledge and understanding of aspects of the areas of Philosophy studied by independent research and by training in methodology. It is not possible to specify detailed learning outcomes because these will vary considerably, depending on the area of research. Outcomes can include:

- familiarity with major concepts and theories in a variety of philosophical areas;
- knowledge of aspects of the history of philosophy relating to the topic of research;
- insight into the key issues raised by the topic of research;
- knowledge of the established principles and practice of research in Philosophy.

Skills and other attributes

- ability to conduct independent research;
- making productive use of research institutions: libraries, and other sources of information;*
- the ability to evaluate critically primary and secondary sources of information;*
- assimilating, interrogating and evaluating critically a wide range of textual material;*
- synthesising complex material to create a coherent argument;*
- evaluating critically scholarly controversies in a variety of areas and topics within Philosophy
- developing of independent judgement;*
- independently planning and executing an original and extended piece of research;*
- extending awareness of the relationship between differing traditions in Philosophy;
- the ability to convey the results of research clearly and systematically in a manner comprehensible to the non-specialist, both orally and in writing;*
- engaging in critical discussion of research both orally and on paper;
- the ability to work, as appropriate, both autonomously and with others;
- self-awareness and self-management;*
- intellectual integrity;*
- flexibility, adaptability, and creativity.*

*transferable skills

[Back to top](#)

Teaching, learning and assessment

Teaching is provided through research seminars and individual supervision. See **Details of the programme structure** below for more details. Full details of the assessments for individual courses can be obtained from the [Department of Classics and Philosophy](#) or the Course leader.

[Back to top](#)

Details of the programme structure(s)

The full-time programme lasts 52 weeks, beginning in September and comprises two formative, non-assessed elements, and two summative elements.

Students must complete the following assignments:

- i. A 5,000 word essay (10%) to be submitted in the first week of the second full term of research.
- ii. An annotated bibliography of major sources for the research, and a list of research resources at the end of the second term of the period of research. Students will receive written feedback.
- iii. A dissertation plan for formal approval at the end of the second term of research. This has to be approved before proceeding to the writing of the dissertation.
- iv. Dissertation (90%) (Maximum 35,000 words.)

The programme starts with an induction period (week 1) and includes philosophy seminars, and sessions with the individual supervisor to support the writing of the dissertation.

1. Research Training (series of seminars)

Research Training will consist of a number of sessions on philosophical issues relating to Philosophy research conducted by core Philosophy staff, which will generally be of two hours duration and will be held at Royal Holloway unless it is more convenient for all to hold them at Bedford Square. The nature of these sessions will vary, depending on the number of students registered on the Masters by Research and

the topics of research. Matters concerning bibliographical and other basic matters to do with the formal aspects of producing a dissertation will be dealt with between the individual supervisor and the student. Students are encouraged to attend relevant sessions of HARC and to take advantage of the many seminars offered by the [Institute of Philosophy](#) at the School of Advanced Study. Students will also receive an introduction to the Library facilities.

2. Individual supervision by specialist supervisor(s).

Students should expect to see their supervisor(s) once every two weeks, for a maximum of 1 hour, during the first two terms for full-time students, half this number of meetings for part-time students. Phone and e-mail contact may take the place of face to face supervision for students who have difficulties attending College. Written work should be produced regularly to be discussed with the supervisor. The School will monitor and take action regarding students who fail to have regular contact with their supervisor, whatever their mode of communication.

A plan of the whole dissertation, with a bibliography, should be submitted after two terms full-time, four terms part-time study. The plan and bibliography will be approved by the supervisor and a further member of the School. The bibliography will detail major sources for the research, and contain a list of other research resources other than libraries, as well as a brief review of the main work already done in the area. Production of the bibliography and the plan is a formal condition of proceeding to the dissertation, and these must be approved by the supervisor. Failure to gain this approval will require further plans to be submitted until such time as the Department is sure the project is viable.

Part-time programme structure

The part-time programme lasts 104 weeks, beginning in September of year one. Part-time students normally attend the induction, the research training and take elements (i), (ii) and (iii) and start on (iv) in their first year and complete (iv) in their second year.

[Back to top](#)

Progression and award requirements

Progression throughout the year/s is monitored through performance in oral presentations, contributions to seminar discussion and coursework. To pass the programme a student must achieve an overall weighted average of at least 50.00% for the dissertation. Failure marks between 40-49% can be condoned in the initial 5000 word essay.

The **Masters** degree with Merit may be awarded if a student achieves an overall weighted average of 60.00% or above, with no mark in any element which counts towards the final assessment falling below 50%.

The **Masters** degree with Distinction may be awarded if a student achieves an overall weighted average of 70.00% or above, with no mark in any element which counts towards the final assessment falling below 50%. A Distinction will not normally be awarded if a student re-sits or re-takes any element of the programme. In exceptional circumstances a viva may be held for a student at the request of the Examiners.

A viva voce is also held following submission of the dissertation. The purpose of the viva is to ensure that the dissertation is the candidate's own work, and to allow a discussion of possible developments of the work for doctoral research. Performance in the viva will not normally affect the agreed mark for the dissertation. In cases where examiners wish to change their mark after the viva, they are required to justify their decision in writing to the Sub-Board of Examiners.

[Back to top](#)

Student support and guidance

- Personal Advisers. All students are allocated to a Personal Adviser, whose role is to offer them advice on academic, pastoral and welfare issues. Personal Advisers see their students at regular intervals, typically once a term, throughout the programme. They are also available for consultation at advertised office hours.

- All tutors are available for consultation by their students at advertised office hours.
- Dissertation Supervisor. Each student is assigned a supervisor, who gives advice on the selection of the topic, supervises the research programme, and provides feedback on one draft of the dissertation.
- A full guide to the programme is provided to students.
- Extensive supporting materials and learning resources are available in the College libraries and in the Computer Centre.
- Students enjoy access to the College Careers Service.
- Students enjoy access to all College and University support services, including the Student Counselling Service, the Health Centre, and the Educational Support Office for students with special needs.
- Within the Department a Staff-Student Committee meets once very term to discuss any issues and concerns. Students on the MA by Research elect a representative to serve on this committee, to express their views as necessary, and to report back to them on any action which is recommended.

[Back to top](#)

Admission requirements

Admission to the programme normally requires a First or Upper Second Class Honours Degree in Philosophy or a Combined Honours Philosophy degree, or a degree with Philosophy as a minor subject. However, the Department also has considerable flexibility in its admissions and offers policy and very strongly encourages applications from non-standard applicants (such as those with degrees in other subjects which often involve substantial amounts of philosophy, like social studies, English, History, Modern Languages, Theology, Cultural Studies, subjects in the natural sciences which involve philosophical issues, and/or with relevant publications). Students whose first language is not English may also be asked for a qualification in English Language at an appropriate level. For further details please refer to the [Prospective Students](#) web page. It may also be helpful to contact the [Admissions Office](#) for specific guidance on the entrance requirements for particular programmes.

Applications should be made after an informal discussion with either the Director of Graduate Studies in the relevant section of the School or the member of staff with whom you wish to study. The staff here will advise you on the compilation and outline of a research topic, which will have to be submitted with the application, and which will be considered by the School's postgraduate admissions team. If you have clear ideas on the area in which you propose to work, please submit these to the School at any point during the year.

[Back to top](#)

Further learning and career opportunities

Graduates from Philosophy Masters by Research programmes progress into a wide range of professions which include journalism, publishing, teaching, the media, advertising and marketing, and the public sector. For other graduates, completing a Masters by Research is an excellent precursor to further research leading to the degree of PhD. For more details on further learning and career opportunities please refer to the [Careers Service](#).

[Back to top](#)

Indicators of quality and standards

Royal Holloway's position as one of the UK's leading research-intensive institutions was confirmed by the results of the most recent Research Assessment Exercise (RAE 2008) conducted by the Higher Education Funding Council (HEFCE). The new scoring system for the RAE 2008 measures research quality in four categories, with the top score of 4* indicating quality that is world-leading and of the highest standards in terms of originality, significance and rigour. 60% of the College's research profile is rated as world-leading or internationally excellent outperforming the national average of 50%. The College is ranked 16th in the UK for research of 4* standard and 18th for 3* and 4* research. Members of the Philosophy teaching staff come from departments which are in the top 10 ranked by proportion of 3* & 4* research.

[Back to top](#)

List of programmes with details of awards, teaching arrangements and accreditation

The programme is taught entirely by staff at Royal Holloway, University of London, and leads to an award of the University of London. Programmes in Philosophy are not subject to accreditation by a professional body. The Banner programme code is given in parentheses.

Master of Arts Programmes in Philosophy (by Research)

MA Philosophy (by Research) (2583)

[Back to top](#)