Programme Specification

**A statement of the knowledge, understanding and skills that underpin a taught programme of study leading to an award from
The University of Sheffield**

Programme Details

1. Programme title	Philosophy
2. Programme codes	PHIU01 (Full-time), PHIU05 (Part-time)
3. QAA FHEQ level	Honours
4. Faculty	Arts and Humanities
5. Department	Philosophy
6. Other departments providing credit bearing modules for the programme	None
7. Accrediting Professional or Statutory Body	None
8. Date of production/revision	July 2022

Awards	Type of award	Duration
9. Final award	Bachelor of Arts with Honours (BA Hons)	3 years (Full-time) 6 years (Part-time)
10. Intermediate awards	None	

Programme Codes

11. JACS code(s) *Select between one and three codes from the HESA website.*	V500		
12. HECoS code(s) S*elect between one and three codes from the HECoS vocabulary.*	100337		

Programme Delivery

13. Mode of study	Full-time or Part-time
14. Mode of delivery	On campus

15. Background to the programme and subject area

Philosophy seeks to understand, and to question, ideas concerning the nature of reality, value and experience that play a pervasive role in understanding the world and ourselves. Some problematic concepts, such as existence, reason and truth, occur in every sphere of human enquiry. Others belong to particular areas of thought and practice, such as art and politics. Philosophy has been practised for thousands of years, and in many different cultures, giving rise to a diversity of traditions.

Philosophy at Sheffield concentrates on the Western philosophical tradition, which is itself diverse and open-ended, stretching back for over 2,500 years and still developing in many different directions. Teaching is informed by the research activities of the staff, particularly at Level 3. The Department has particular research specialisms in epistemology, metaphysics, philosophy of psychology and language, philosophical logic, ethics and political philosophy, German philosophy and feminism.

Study of philosophy develops skills of comprehension, analysis and communication, which are an excellent training for a very wide range of careers. Recent Sheffield philosophy graduates have gone on to employment in various forms of management in the manufacturing and service industries, as well to posts in the civil service, teaching and in computing; and also to various forms of further training, such as the law and postgraduate work in philosophy and other disciplines.

Further information is available

on the Department's web site: http://www.shef.ac.uk/philosophy

16. Programme aims

BA (Hons) Philosophy aims to:	
A1	Equip students with an understanding of a range of philosophers and philosophical problems, while encouraging as deep a critical engagement with those philosophers and problems as is feasible in the time available.
A2	Promote respect for the norms of – clarity; careful analysis; critical reflection; rational argument; sympathetic interpretation and understanding; and impartial pursuit of truth.
A3	Promote independence of thought and a critical and analytical approach, not only to theories and concepts, but to the assumptions on which they are based.
A4	Equip students with the core skills involved in – careful reading, comprehension and compression of textual material; clear thinking; sound argumentation; and the clear and well-organised expression of ideas.
A5	Provide high quality teaching which is informed and invigorated by the research activities of members of staff.
A6	Facilitate an awareness of the application of philosophical thought to other academic disciplines or to matters of public interest, encouraging students to apply philosophical skills more widely where appropriate.

A7	Encourage students to plan for themselves the contents of their degree programmes in philosophy, and to plan and organise their own work, within the constraints and advice provided by the Department.
A8	Recruit highly qualified students, while at the same time providing access for those with non-standard qualifications who can benefit successfully from the appropriate level of degree work.

17. Programme learning outcomes

Knowledge and understanding

On successful completion of the programme, students will be able to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of:

		Links to Aim(s)
K1	Some of the central distinctions and arguments in moral and political philosophy, epistemology, metaphysics, philosophy of mind and language.	1, 2, 3, 4
K2	Some central areas of Western analytical philosophy.	1, 3, 4
K3	Some of the major philosophers, encountered in their own writings, and some awareness of important areas of interpretative controversy concerning those philosophers.	1, 3, 4, 6
K4	Properly specialised philosophical terminology.	1, 2, 3, 4, 6
K5	Some major issues currently at the forefront of philosophical debate and research.	1, 2, 3, 4, 6

Skills and other attributes

On successful completion of the programme, students will be able to:

S1	Read carefully and interpret philosophical texts, and to identify textually-based arguments.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
S2	Analyse the structure of complex and controversial problems, with an understanding of major strategies of reasoning designed to resolve such problems.	2, 3, 4, 6
S3	Abstract, analyse and assess arguments carefully, distinguishing what is relevant to the issue under discussion from what is not.	2, 3, 4, 6
S4	Recognise the strengths and weaknesses of arguments for and against a philosophical position.	1, 2, 3, 4
S5	Construct a detailed individual line of argument in support of one's own position and defend it in a clear and effective manner.	2, 3, 4, 6

18. Learning and teaching methods

Development of the learning outcomes is promoted through the following teaching and learning methods:

K1- K5: Knowledge and Understanding

Induction procedures and introduction to study skills at Level 1 include the distribution of level-specific handbooks, a Welcome Meeting and personal advisory tutorial all designed to aid module choice. In addition, the core 20-credit modules 'Writing Philosophy', 'Ethics and Society', 'Reason and Argument' and 'Mind and World' help to develop subject-specific study, discussion and IT skills, including research skills, use of library databases and the evaluation of information sources thus contributing to the development of key skills (e.g. A1-A4, A6). These modules will also help students develop an awareness of the assessment criteria.

Lectures provide introductory guidance to particular bodies of academic material and to philosophical terminology, and offer guidance on how that material is to be understood, used and evaluated. Lectures are clearly linked to follow-up seminars. Having attended a lecture on a topic, students are then well equipped to do more analytical work both in private study and in small-group discussions.

Tutorials run by graduate students at Level 1 and **seminars** run by lecturers at Levels 2 and 3 enable students to work through pieces of text or problems in detail, thereby developing their understanding of philosophical texts and problems. Tutorials and seminars may be either staff or student-led and are designed to encourage discussion of the issues raised in lectures by means of relevant stimulus material.

Private Study in preparation for lectures, seminars and assessment develops students' understanding of texts and problems, and increases their knowledge base. New students are introduced to study skills through information in the student handbook and through the advice and assistance of tutors in Level 1 modules. The amount of independent study broadly expected for each module is clearly set out in the relevant departmental booklet, although it is generally recognised that this will vary from student to student. Provision exists at Level 3 for supervised independent study leading to the writing of a *Long Essay*.

A1 - A5: Intellectual Skills

Induction procedures such as the departmental booklets and a lecture given at the Welcome Meeting are designed to help students engage with their chosen modules in a critical and analytical way and produce written work which is lucid, well informed and well structured.

At all Levels, discussion both in **lectures** and to an even greater extent in **seminars** and **tutorials** facilitates the student's reading and analysis of philosophical texts and encourages them to develop their own lines of thought against a rigorous background provided by lectures and by private study of assigned reading.

At Level 3, the one-on-one **advisory essay tutorials** which are associated with many modules enable lecturers and students to work together on a particular piece of student work, improving it and giving the student the opportunity to elaborate and defend their views in discussion. The lecturer reads a draft of the essay prior to the advisory tutorial and provides detailed comments on it during the session. The peer feedback sessions which some modules employ instead allow students to acquire a better understanding of the way in which the marking process works, and to develop their writing skills by seeing how their choices affect the ways in which final marks are determined.

Staff Office Hours provide an opportunity, each week, for students to come and discuss philosophical matters one-on-one with their lecturers and students are encouraged to make use of this facility.

Generic Transferable Skills

Students develop transferable skills of reading and comprehension through preparation for seminars, tutorials, advisory tutorials, essays and exams.

Seminars, tutorials and advisory tutorials enable students to strengthen their capacities to question and evaluate the material being studied and to formulate opinions. They also develop oral communication skills, both through the medium of discussion and where students are asked to give presentations in seminars.

A library induction session and the University's IT induction sessions introduce students to essential learning skills. Throughout the programme, students have the opportunity to acquire and enhance the ability to use IT and library skills for the purposes of acquiring, presenting and communicating relevant information.

19. Assessment and feedback methods

Opportunities to demonstrate achievement of the learning outcomes are provided through the following assessment methods:

K1- K5: Knowledge and Understanding

Coursework essays at all Levels are used to encourage study in depth and written feedback is provided on all coursework essays. Feedback on these essays is of two kinds: *summative* feedback provides a mark which evaluates the essay whilst *formative* furnishes advice on how the essay might be improved. At Level 1, both summative and formative feedback is provided by the tutor who can also advise on the gestation and drafting of essays. Level 1 essays are between 1,000 and 1,500 words in length.

At Level 2, there is an end of semester coursework essay for each module which receives summative and formative feedback from the lecturer. At Level 2 there is, in addition, a (perhaps optional and then unassessed) mid-semester piece of work which may take various forms – unseen class exams, take-home exams, coursework essays – and which receives written summative and formative feedback. These two written assessments are equally weighted and together account for 50% of the module mark; if there is just one piece of mid-semester work then it will be worth 50% of the final module mark. All Level 2 modules are 20-credit modules and coursework essays are between 1500 and 2000 words in length.

At Level 3, students write one piece of end of semester coursework for each module, which accounts for 50% of the module mark. Formative feedback, oral or written, is typically given on this essay in an advisory essay tutorial with the lecturer before the essay is handed in; some modules instead use an innovative system of peer feedback sessions to improve student of essay-writing skills. Written summative and formative feedback is given by the lecturer on the final submission. All Level 3 modules are 20-credit modules and at present, coursework essays are between 3000 and 4000 words in length. Students also have the chance to write a Long Essay in connection with some of their Level 3 modules, an essay which accounts for 100% of their mark for that module. The lecturer gives advice on the gestation and drafting of Long Essays in at least two one-to-one meetings and then provides feedback, both summative and formative, on the final draft. At present, Long Essays are between 4500 and 6000 words in length. Students may also choose to take independent research-based Philosophical Projects modules, leading to Long Essays.

End of semester examinations are used at all Levels to encourage students to accumulate a wider knowledge base and to test their ability to use information selectively and draw together arguments concisely. Every module is assessed by means of an end of semester exam (except where a Long Essay is written at Level 3) and this examination accounts for 50% of the module mark. 10-credit modules are assessed by means of a one-hour examination (at Level 1) and 20-credit modules by means of a two-hour examination. Questions may be released before the examination, allowing the student to prepare answers in advance and thereby testing their depth of knowledge and ability to organise material in a concise form. Alternatively, examinations may be unseen, testing student's ability to deploy relevant information effectively under strict time constraints and in response to questions which are not pre-released.

A1 - A5: Intellectual Skills

As the student moves through the programme, the coursework essays required of them become progressively longer and more detailed, testing their depth of knowledge, their grasp of detail and their ability to assimilate and organise progressively larger amounts of material. The feedback provided also becomes more intensive, culminating in the advisory essay tutorials at Level 3 which give students an opportunity to defend their views and respond to criticism in a pertinent and open-minded

way. The end of semester examinations become more probing at successive Levels, requiring the deployment of increasingly sophisticated material, the marshalling of more complex forms of argumentation and increasing care in making distinctions, eliminating irrelevance and in analysing the content of relevant texts.

Generic Transferable Skills

Skills of self-motivation, organisation and self-discipline are tested in different ways by coursework essays, long essays and examinations. These modes of assessment also constitute an indirect test of a student's ability to use library resources and IT. Research and presentation skills are also developed by the Level 1 core modules. Feedback on essays will comment on student's written communication skills. Although student presentations are not always explicitly assessed, informal feedback is provided

20. Programme structure and student development

The programme is clearly differentiated into modules at three different Levels, a structure which ensures a clear progression with increasing demands on the learner in terms of intellectual challenge, skills, knowledge, conceptualisation and learning autonomy. Some modules are flagged as being recommended prerequisites for others, helping students to plan a coherent programme of study. The four 20-credit core modules at Level 1 introduce students to key areas of Western Philosophy, ones that are central to all further parts of the subject, as well as providing students with an opportunity to become familiar with marking criteria; the Writing Philosophy module also provides training in the specifics of presenting philosophical ideas and arguments in writing. Personal tutors are available to offer advice and guidance on module choice. The programme combines a flexibility which enables students to pursue their own individual interests with a definite sense of intellectual progression and cumulative achievement. Only marks obtained at Levels 2 and 3 count towards the student's final degree classification.

The teaching provision at each Level is tailored to the demands of that Level. At Level 1, lectures are supplemented by tutorials run by graduate students which enable students to clarify and discuss points raised in the lectures. At Level 2, lectures are supplemented by seminars run by the lecturer. Like Level 1 tutorials, these seminars aim at the clarification and discussion of points raised in the lectures but they encourage a deeper treatment of the issues with more challenging stimulus material. At Level 3, modules are designed to mesh with the research interests of the lecturer, providing students with the opportunity to engage with developments at the frontiers of the discipline.

Modules at **Level 1** are intended to develop the ability

- to think through and communicate points cogently and analytically in the form of tutorial discussion, the academic essay and the timed examination;
- to read philosophical texts carefully and analytically;
- to present written work professionally;
- to appreciate and deploy some of the central distinctions and arguments in several of the following: theory of knowledge, philosophy of science, philosophy of mind, philosophy of religion, moral and political philosophy; elementary formal logic; and critical thinking;
- to learn to work together and to make discriminating use of some of the various information resources (web, library) beyond those specifically directed on reading lists.

Modules at **Level 2** are intended to develop

- a deeper knowledge and understanding of the areas of Western philosophy covered in Level 1;
- an ability to follow and critically evaluate contemporary debates in philosophy;
- increasing sophistication in the reading of philosophical texts and in the communication of philosophical ideas and arguments;
- increased ability to think through intellectual problems independently.

Modules at **Level 3** are intended to develop the ability

- to critically evaluate some of the most challenging areas of Western philosophy;
- to construct one's own line of argument as part of the solution to difficult intellectual problems;
- to appreciate the limits of knowledge and the preconditions for its acquisition;

to exercise an extensive range of subject-specific and generic transferable skills.

Detailed information about the structure of programmes, regulations concerning assessment and progression and descriptions of individual modules are published in the University Calendar available online at http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/calendar/.

21. Criteria for admission to the programme

Detailed information regarding admission to programmes is available from the University's On-Line Prospectus at http://www.shef.ac.uk/courses/.

22. Reference points

The learning outcomes have been developed to reflect the following points of reference:

Subject Benchmark Statements
https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code/subject-benchmark-statements

Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (2014)
https://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/quality-code/qualifications-frameworks.pdf

University Vision and Strategic Plan
http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/strategicplan

University Vision and Strategic Pan - Education Pillar
Education | Vision and strategic plan | The University of Sheffield

23. Additional information

For further information students are directed to the Departmental web pages at http://www.shef.ac.uk/philosophy. These contain full information on all modules and provide access to student handbooks

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This specification represents a concise statement about the main features of the programme and should be considered alongside other sources of information provided by the teaching department(s) and the University. In addition to programme specific information, further information about studying at The University of Sheffield can be accessed via our Student Services web site at http://www.shef.ac.uk/ssid.