



University of London BA and Diploma in Philosophy

with support from Pathways

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University of London prospectus for undergraduate study
in Humanities available from:
www.londonexternal.ac.uk/undergraduate/philosophy/study.shtml

From the Director of Studies

The Diploma and BA in Philosophy from London University is a new exciting development for Pathways, arising from talks held with London University at the beginning of 2003.

We are now able to offer full tutorial support for the University of London External Programme in Philosophy, alongside our own Pathways to Philosophy programs and the Associate and Fellowship awards of the International Society for Philosophers (ISFP).

The University of London BA Philosophy for External students is administered by Birkbeck College London. Academic staff from Birkbeck College plan the syllabuses, develop and write study materials especially for External students, set the examination papers and mark scripts.

As a graduate of Birkbeck College, I can vouch for their high standards of academic excellence. The University of London is among the top rated Universities for academic philosophy in the UK.

The University of London BA Philosophy degree is the same for External students as for Internal students attending one of the Colleges of London University. The only difference is that London do not offer any teaching to External students. That is where Pathways comes in.

In the 2003 Prospectus for the London University External Programme, Pathways is listed as one of only three institutions in the world currently offering teaching support for the University of London Philosophy BA, and the only institution which concentrates solely on Philosophy.

As well as a BA degree, the University of London also offer a Diploma in Philosophy. You can register for the Diploma, and then convert to the BA after passing the examinations for the Diploma.

The University of London BA Philosophy degree consists of ten modules. The University of London Diploma in Philosophy consists of three modules plus a special introductory module. Assessment is by written examination. There are local examination centres all over the world: details can be found in the Prospectus. In any one year you may take the examination in a minimum of one and maximum of four modules.

For information about the University of London External program and entrance requirements, or to obtain an electronic copy of the University of London Prospectus Undergraduate Study in the Humanities please follow this link:

www.londonexternal.ac.uk/prospective_students/undergraduate/birkbeck/philosophy/index.shtml

Alternatively, you can write to:

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If you have any questions about the tuition provided by Pathways to Philosophy which are not answered in the following pages, please contact me at **G.Klempner@sheffield.ac.uk** .

Yours sincerely,

Geoffrey Klempner

Preface: Studying with the University of London External Programme

by Moira McIntyre

I've just completed a University of London External Programme BA in Philosophy which I've been studying for over the past four years. I hope the following advice will be of use to anyone who is studying or planning to study via this route in the future. All of these are things I learnt "the hard way" by having to develop my study plan year on year. I hope this article will help some others get the most from the external programme.

A. Make sure what you're studying will be examined

The biggest problem I found with the programme was the vagueness of the syllabuses. Often what was included in the syllabuses were rarely featured if at all on exam papers. There is nothing more frustrating than spending a lot of time preparing a topic area for it to not appear on the exam paper when you arrive. I found the following structure very helpful.

1. Read a general introductory text to this area and the appropriate chapter in the provided course texts.
2. This provides you with a basis to evaluate the questions on the past papers and group them into frequently occurring topics. Focus only on those topics which appear frequently. I am very interested in applied ethics and spent a fair amount of time on this topic erroneously as it only rarely appeared on the exam.
3. Don't try and study every topic on the module, focus on five to six. This should give you plenty of choice in the exam without making you spend too much time trying to decide.
4. Try and make sure that the reading you do covers the breadth of questions under this topic. If you are doing a historical module, keep your topics in mind when doing your initial reading of the course texts.
5. Once you've started to read around the area, try and come up with your own opinions on the topic that you're studying and then try to find arguments that back up or challenge this argument. I find it a lot easier to argue for something that is my point of view.

B. Be concise

When making notes for the course, bear in mind that it is completely assessed by exam. There is no point copying out long quotes, even if it does state the argument you want exactly. It is unlikely that you'll be able to memorise this for your exams. Instead, look for a summary sentence that sums it up that you may be able to memorise. Also focus on the fact that you've got only an hour to write on any topic by not gaining too much information. This may detract you from making a clear argument in the exam by trying to write down a lot of information in a rushed manner. For my final exams, I condensed each topic into a Mind Map covering just an A4 sheet of paper.

C. Be prepared for new perspectives

On all topics, you could get surprised and find a new perspective is questioned in the exam if you are unprepared. Try to prepare for exams by:

1. Splitting questions on the topic into two and using half to aid your enquiry and half to use as practice papers by tackling them without specifically having looked for information. This should allow you to find gaps which you need to research.
2. I found using the paper from the previous year as an unseen practice where I timed it in exam conditions - so I had to decide on questions, plan etc in exam conditions - further helped me plan for the unexpected.
3. Read recent journals. Often the examiners appear to ask questions on topics that have recently been brought up in journals and debates.
4. Make sure you're familiar with all terms featured in past papers and also all arguments that the examiners suggest are relevant in their reports.

D. Reading for speed

A lot of philosophical arguments in books or journals are quite lengthy and wordy. This can be both hard to get to grips with and also present you with an argument that you can't re-present in an exam. If you consider that you'll want to present at least three arguments in your exam, knowing and having read all the possible counter arguments from a 40 page paper isn't going to fit in the time. I found it is often possible to search on Jstor to find someone who has criticised or furthered an argument: they will often have summarised the argument that they're going to discuss in the first page or two.

Best of luck to anyone studying through the external programme!

Moir McIntyre

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1 Pathways and the External Programme

About the External Programme

The University of London External Programme is designed and assessed according to the same standards of the BA degree taken by Internal students attending one of the Colleges of London University. The ten module course in Philosophy, which takes British students three years studying full-time, usually requires at least five years for distance learning students. So it is worth reflecting for a moment how much you really want a BA Philosophy degree.

In those five years, you will learn a great deal of philosophy. The reason for taking the degree is not just for the glory of adding 'BA (Hons) London' to your name. Or it had better not be, because if it is, the chances are that you will not finish the course.

London University do offer a less demanding alternative, a Diploma in Philosophy which normally takes two years for the three modules plus a special introductory module. The entrance requirements are lower, and students who successfully complete the Diploma have the option to transfer to the BA. The University of London Diploma is a very worth while qualification.

Currently, there are around 150 External students around the world at different stages of their London BA studies.

How the program works

Pathways offers the same support for the University of London BA and University of London Diploma. You will be assigned a Pathways mentor, who will communicate with you on a one-to-one basis. In the course of studying for one course module you will send work regularly to your mentor for evaluation. Your mentor will discuss the points raised in each assignment, as well as indicating the marks which your work would be likely to receive when assessed at the appropriate level.

When you are accepted on the External Programme, London University will send you a bulky study pack. The pack includes:

Philosophy: A Guide Through the Subject/ Further Through the Subject (See Pathways Introductory Book List) Edited by A.C. Graylong, based on course outlines developed by philosophy lecturers at Colleges of London University.

Academic Guidance Handbook You should read the Handbook carefully. This contains advice which will guide you in deciding how to pace your studies, and devising a study plan.

BA Philosophy Examination papers These sets of past papers include Examiners' reports on how candidates responded to each of the questions on every paper set for that year. You will find these reports an invaluable guide to writing a successful examination answer.

London University recommend taking two modules in one year. We estimate that in studying for one module, you will send your mentor between six and eight pieces of work of around 2000—2500 words. So you will be aiming to produce an assignment or essay every three to four weeks. Your mentor will also be on hand if at any time you get stuck or need advice with your studies.

The purpose of writing essays is to develop and enhance your understanding of a subject. It is not a good idea to try to learn essays 'off by heart'. When you sit the exam, you might get lucky, and find an examination question that exactly matches the essay you have memorized. But it is far more likely that the question will ask for something subtly different. Then you will have to think, which is exactly what the Examiners want you to do.

One great advantage of attending written examinations is that they severely curtail opportunities for plagiarism, a practice which has reached epidemic proportions in some universities. There is no way you can earn a good London BA Honours degree by cheating. However, if you are prepared to do the work, and think for yourself, your efforts will be handsomely rewarded.

2 Required, further and optional modules

[The following information is taken from the University of London Prospectus *Undergraduate Study in the Humanities* p. 35.]

BA Philosophy

All BA students take the following modules:

Logic
Epistemology
Greek philosophy: The Pre-Socratics and Plato
Modern philosophy: Descartes, Locke, Berkeley and Hume
Ethics: historical perspectives

Plus three *further* modules from the following:

Metaphysics
Methodology
Greek philosophy: Aristotle
Modern philosophy: Spinoza, Leibniz and Kant
Ethics: contemporary perspectives

Plus two *optional* modules from the following:

Continental philosophy from Hegel
Philosophy of mind
Philosophy of language
Philosophy of Kant
The philosophies of Frege, Russell and Wittgenstein
Political philosophy
Aesthetics
Symbolic logic
Philosophy of science
Philosophy of religion
Post-Aristotelian philosophy
Medieval philosophy
Indian philosophy
Philosophy of mathematics

Diploma in Philosophy

All students take:

Introduction to Philosophy

Plus three *further* modules from the following:

Logic
Epistemology
Greek philosophy: the Pre-Socratics and Plato
Modern philosophy: Descartes, Locke, Berkeley and Hume
Ethics: historical perspectives

3 Course syllabuses

[The following information is taken from the University of London Prospectus Undergraduate Study in the Humanities p. 36.]

Introduction to philosophy

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. Included here will be: free will, determinism and responsibility, personal identity, the relation of the mind to the body, the nature of knowledge and the issue of equality.

(Note that this subject is only available for students studying the Diploma in Philosophy.)

Epistemology

An investigation of the problems of analysing knowledge, and dealing with the challenge of scepticism.

Metaphysics

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.

Modern Philosophy: Descartes, Locke, Berkeley and Hume

Study of the main metaphysical, logical and epistemological views of Descartes, Locke, Berkeley and Hume.

Greek philosophy: the Pre-Socratics and Plato

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, Theaetetus, Phaedo, Philebus and Parmenides.

Ethics: historical perspectives

An exploration of the history of moral philosophy. Views studied include those of Plato, Aristotle, Hume, Kant, Mill, Moore and Ayer, as well as the history of such doctrines as deontology, naturalism, utilitarianism and emotivism.

Logic

(It is presupposed that the student will have some background in elementary formal logic.)

The course itself is broadly concerned with the philosophical questions that arise from logic. Topics included are: truth, conditionals and validity, reference, necessity, vagueness, as well as a number of issues addressing the relationship between natural language and logic.

Methodology

An investigation of explanation generally, and in science, as well as the problems of induction and confirmation.

Modern philosophy: Spinoza, Leibniz and Kant

Study of the main metaphysical, logical and epistemological views of Spinoza, Leibniz and Kant.

Greek philosophy: Aristotle

The study of the broadly metaphysical, logical and epistemological doctrines of Aristotle. Works covered include Physics, On God, On the Soul, Categories, Posterior Analytics and Metaphysics.

Ethics: contemporary perspectives

An investigation of 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.

Continental philosophy from Hegel

The main doctrines of post-Hegelian philosophers from Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, and the doctrines of phenomenological philosophers from Brentano to Merleau-Ponty.

Philosophy of mind

An exploration of the problems raised by intentionality, consciousness and action. Issues covered include: the relationship of the mind to the physical world, the understanding of subjectivity and the nature of human action.

Philosophy of language

An exploration of the notion of meaning as well as an investigation into the more detailed problems arising from the study of natural language. Included are topics such as: metaphor, reference and the nature of rules of language.

Philosophy of Kant

A study of the views of Kant with special reference to his Critique of Pure Reason, Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals and the first part of the Critique of Judgement.

The philosophies of Frege, Russell and Wittgenstein

The study of the foundations of analytic philosophy through an exploration of the main works of Frege, Russell and Wittgenstein.

Political philosophy

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 Plato, Aristotle, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Hegel, Marx and Mill. Contemporary issues involved topics such as the state, justice, democracy, equality, toleration, liberty, rights, social choice theory and feminism.

Aesthetics

An investigation of problems such as: the nature and value of art, aesthetic judgment, representation, expression and interpretation. Included will be a historical approach to these issues involving writers such as Plato, Aristotle, Kant, Nietzsche and Collingwood.

Symbolic logic

The study of the meta-theory of formal systems, set theory, computability and an exploration of non-standard logics. This course is most naturally paired with the Philosophy of Mathematics and demands some familiarity with technical results in mathematics.

Philosophy of science

The study of explanation in science, including an investigation of theories and theoretical reduction, laws of nature, probability and confirmation, accounts of space and time and the interpretation of quantum mechanics.

Philosophy of religion

The overall aim of this course is the philosophical scrutiny of the claims of religious believers and those made on behalf of the major religious traditions. Specific topics include: arguments for God's existence, an investigation of religious language, the nature of religious experience and the issue of the soul and immortality.

Post-Aristotelian philosophy

A study of the philosophical writings of the period from 322 BC to 600 AD. The Hellenistic and Neoplatonic traditions are the main ones that figure in this period.

Medieval philosophy

The study of metaphysical and epistemological writings of the period from Augustine to Suarez, including besides these: Boethius, Anselm, Aquinas, Abelard, Duns Scotus and Ockham. Also studied are the medieval Jewish and Islamic traditions.

Indian philosophy

The study of the views of the central figures in the history of Indian Philosophy. Note that a knowledge of Sanskrit is recommended for this course.

Philosophy of Mathematics

This course centres on the problem of how to give an account of both mathematical knowledge and mathematical reality which are plausible and coherent. Some knowledge of mathematics is necessary, and this course forms a natural pair with Symbolic Logic.

Note The range of modules available sometimes changes. If there is a particular topic which you are keen to take, you should check when you apply to the University of London that this option will be available.

4 How to gain a First

The University of London BA Degree in Philosophy is awarded in five classifications:

First Class Honours

Upper Second Class Honours

Lower Second Class Honours

Third class Honours

Pass

The University of London Diploma in Philosophy is awarded in three classifications:

Pass with Merit

Pass with Credit

Pass

Individual course modules are marked at the same standard whether you are taking the BA or Diploma. The classification of your BA or Diploma is calculated on the basis of your scores of the ten BA or four Diploma course modules.

The aim is not just to pass. It is in fact quite difficult — unless you deliberately set out to write complete rubbish — to fail a Philosophy paper. In practice, you will be aiming to score at least an Upper Second. This is in fact the standard set for a Pass for the Pathways Associate and Fellowship Programs. However, there is no harm in aiming still higher.

Not so long ago, before the exponential increase in the technical sophistication of articles submitted to Philosophy journals, it was possible for the keen undergraduate student to keep up with the 'state of the art' in academic philosophy. Course reading lists included the latest journal articles. Undergraduate students felt that they had the opportunity to contribute to ongoing debates. That is becoming less true today.

That is a sad, although perhaps inevitable state of affairs. But this is not the place to lecture on the shortcomings of contemporary academic philosophy.

So what does it take to get a First these days? In one respect, the advice is still the same. Don't rely exclusively on reading lists. Don't become dependent on spoon feeding. Do your own research. Take Francis Bacon's advice: there are just a few philosophy books, amongst the great bulk of material piling up in libraries and book stores, that deserve to be "read, marked and inwardly digested".

It is perhaps less likely than it was thirty years ago that the results of your research will amount to a contribution to contemporary state-of-the-art debates. But that was never the real aim. What the examiners are looking for more than anything else is a candidate who can genuinely *think* and *argue* and not just reproduce the contents of lecture notes. You can train yourself to do that by challenging every text that you read. "Be bloody-minded," one of my lecturers once taught me, and that is excellent advice. Don't treat the words of philosophers with too much respect.

Despite your best attempts at being disrespectful to philosophical texts, there will come a time when you find yourself in awe of one of the great figures of philosophy. It might be Descartes or Hume, Hegel or Kant, Nietzsche or Wittgenstein. Enjoy the feeling for a while. That is how you learn to model yourself on the best. Then, when you are ready, move on.

Above all, learn to be critical of yourself. If you are pleased with something you have written, the chances are you haven't looked at it carefully enough. We all have our tricks and ruses for letting ourselves off the hook. You should never be satisfied. But don't send work to your mentor that you know can be improved. If you do know how to improve it, then you should have done so.

And when your best work comes back from your mentor, with objections and criticisms rather than praise, don't treat it as a setback but as an opportunity to grow.