



KEELE
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postgraduate taught course:opportunities

Medical Ethics and Law

Centre for Professional Ethics

MA, PG Diploma

Full Time, Part Time, Distance Learning

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Aims of the Course

This course aims to deepen your understanding of healthcare ethics and law, and to enhance your ability to think systematically about the moral and legal issues that you may face in the course of your work. If you successfully complete the MA and wish to continue your studies in this area, you may apply to proceed to a Professional Doctorate in Medical Ethics (DMedEth), which combines taught modules with the production of a doctoral level thesis. Supervision is also available on a full-time basis for an MRes, MPhil or PhD.

Entry Requirements

Applicants should either have a degree in a relevant subject, or appropriate professional qualifications and experience. Applications are welcome from people with a professional or other serious interest in healthcare ethics and law, such as doctors, nurses, midwives, healthcare managers, physiotherapists, radiographers, chaplains, legal professionals, and voluntary workers.

Introduction

This course is designed especially for healthcare professionals and those working in fields related to healthcare. It provides them with an opportunity to gain a deeper and more systematic understanding of ethical and legal issues in those fields, to explore the moral problems which they face in their work, to recognise issues raising potential legal liability, and to understand healthcare practice in its legal and social context.

The course is structured to be compatible with the demands of fulltime employment, and to be accessible from all over the UK or beyond. It is taught jointly by staff from the Centre for Professional Ethics and the Department of Law who between them have published a wide range of articles and books in this area. From time to time, experts from outside Keele may also be invited to speak on the course. Members of the Centre for Professional Ethics are regularly commissioned to provide inhouse ethics training for healthcare professionals at venues throughout the UK.

The Medical Ethics and Law teaching team have many years experience of teaching this and other postgraduate ethics and law programmes. We are therefore very aware of the special problems and challenges which sometimes face those combining study with full-time work, and do our utmost to offer a supportive and stimulating environment for learning. A recent report from the Quality Assurance Agency awarded the Centre for Professional Ethics the highest possible mark of 24 for its teaching programmes. The report described the MA course as "highly innovative" and "professionally relevant [with] immediate practical application", and praised the course's "diverse student profile" as a key strength, which "enriches the learning experience". We are also pleased to see that some of our students' work has been published in professional journals and edited collections.





Course Structure and Content

Details correct at time of printing

Masters courses require the successful completion of 180 M level credits: 120 credits through taught modules, and 60 credits for the dissertation of 15,000-20,000 words.

Year one consists of four taught modules worth 30 credits each. Each of these modules is taught in a single intensive three day teaching block. The first of these blocks is normally in October, with subsequent blocks spread throughout the academic year.

In year two, students go on to research and write a dissertation to obtain the award of Master of Arts (MA). There are no specific attendance requirements at all during the second year - you may either meet with your supervisor at mutually convenient times, or keep in touch by phone or email, or use a combination of methods. If you successfully complete the taught modules, but do not wish to write a dissertation, you will be awarded a Postgraduate Diploma (PgDip). We regard high levels of student participation in discussion as particularly important for teaching and learning in this area, and employ teaching techniques which encourage this wherever possible. You will also be allocated a personal supervisor, to advise and assist you with your studies.

Course Modules

Module 1: Introduction to Moral and Legal Concepts

An introduction to the concepts and theories used on the course; the distinction between consequentialist and deontological theories of ethics; the relationship between law and morality and the nature of moral and legal rights; an introduction to some basic legal concepts, the structure of the English legal system, and the Human Rights Act. This block also includes an introduction to philosophical argument and a session on library and IT skills for postgraduate students.

Module 2: Autonomy and Paternalism

Is paternalism ever acceptable? Is deceiving patients always wrong? To what extent should doctors use their discretion to keep information from the patient? To what extent should patients have control over their own treatment? Topics covered in this module include: medical negligence, ethical and legal issues raised in consent to treatment; confidentiality.

Module 3: Life and Death

This module examines a variety of difficult ethical issues relating to the creation and destruction of human life. For example, does the law currently strike the right balance between protecting the foetus and respecting women's autonomy? Should we deny terminally ill patients the right to choose to end their own lives by lethal injection? Topics covered include: the moral and legal status of the embryo; legal and ethical issues raised by reproductive technologies; the definition of death; moral and legal problems regarding euthanasia and withdrawal of medical treatment.

Module 4: Public Health

Areas normally covered include: justice and resource allocation or 'rationing'; research ethics; discrimination and healthcare; public health ethics; organ transplantation; issues raised by new technologies. Module 4 normally includes at least one session which looks at a topical legal and ethical issue in health policy.

Assessment

Each of the taught modules is assessed by an assignment of up to 4000 words. If you successfully complete the taught modules, you may apply to progress to the MA stage, which involves researching and writing a dissertation of 15,000 - 20,000 words on an approved topic.

Funding

The value of training in healthcare ethics and law is widely recognised, particularly by NHS trusts. Professional accreditation points (eg CME and PGEA) are normally available through the development of a personal learning plan. In previous years a number of students on our other courses have managed to obtain full or partial funding from their employers. The value of training in this area is increasingly recognised by employers, and the opportunity to undertake a detailed examination of a particularly pertinent ethical issue in research ethics could be very beneficial to the organisation. In addition, for those students who are members of research ethics committees, funding may be available through their committee.

Application Procedure

Details of application procedures are given on the postgraduate website at www.keele.ac.uk/postgraduate. If you are unable to access this then an application form and the Postgraduate Prospectus can be requested via email, telephone or post:

Email: postgrad@keele.ac.uk

Tel: 01782 584472

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