

**Quality Assurance**

**Masters, Postgraduate Diploma, Postgraduate Certificate in Medical Ethics and Palliative Care**

**Programme Specification: Postgraduate**

Information for students: the programme specification is the definitive document summarising the structure and content of your degree programme. It is reviewed and updated every year as part of Keele’s Annual Programme Review process. The document aims to clarify to potential and current students what you can expect from the study of the subject over the course of your programme.

<b>Names of programme(s) and award title(s)</b>	MA in Medical Ethics and Palliative Care PGDip in Medical Ethics and Palliative Care PGCert in Medical Ethics and Palliative Care PGCert in Ethics in Palliative Care
<b>Mode of study</b>	Full time/part time/modular
<b>Framework of Higher Education Qualification (FHEQ) level of final award</b>	7
<b>Duration</b>	One year full time Two years part time Up to five years modular

External Examiner:

Information regarding external examiners can be found at: [www.keele.ac.uk/ga/externalexaminers](http://www.keele.ac.uk/ga/externalexaminers)

**1. What is the philosophy of the Programme?**

Major advances in medical technology, increased expectations, and changing moral attitudes have combined to generate many complex ethical and legal problems in the fields related to palliative care. Individuals who care for patients with life-threatening illnesses can face particularly pressing and difficult moral choices. The programme provides an opportunity to gain a deeper and more systematic understanding of these issues, and to explore the moral problems health care professionals working in these areas may face.

Applications are welcome from people with a professional or other serious interest in Medical Ethics and Palliative Care, including (but not limited to) doctors, nurses, health care managers, intercalating medical students, radiographers, chaplains, charity and voluntary workers, social workers, hospice directors, medical and pharmaceutical researchers, and health care educators. While the programme is primarily aimed at healthcare professionals, it is open to anyone who is suitably qualified and who can demonstrate sufficient academic aptitude.

This programme is run by Medical Ethicists and Lawyers from the School of Law at Keele University, with additional teaching input from clinical specialists in Palliative and End of Life Care from the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences School of Nursing and Midwifery. It remains the only programme of its kind in the UK specialising in palliative care and end of life medical ethics.

**Aims**

The aims of the MA in Medical Ethics and Palliative Care are to:

- Provide students with a high quality education in medical ethics and law with a specialist focus on the ethics of palliative care;

- Provide students with an adequate basis in both knowledge and skills for further work in the subject;
- Provide students with knowledge, or the means to acquire knowledge and critical abilities;
- Provide students with the skills and knowledge they will need in order to deal adequately with the ethical problems and dilemmas which they may face in their day-to-day professional work.
- Provide students with awareness and understanding of the main contemporary issues in the academic literature on medical ethics and law in palliative care.

### ***Intended Learning Outcomes***

Students who complete the MA in Medical Ethics and Palliative Care will have demonstrated:

- An understanding of important theories and arguments in applied ethics and/or law, and of their relevance to healthcare practice and policy, with a focus on palliative care.
- A detailed knowledge and understanding of selected key arguments and issues in medical ethics with a focus on palliative care;
- The ability to understand and critically evaluate complex ethical and medical legal texts, including contemporary research-based materials (e.g. cases and statutes);
- The ability to apply ethical and legal theories and arguments to practical problems in healthcare practice and policy in palliative care, to construct ethical or legal arguments in written form and to defend those arguments against criticism;
- The ability to conduct a detailed and systematic investigation of an ethical problem and/or legal problem and to reach conclusions based on sound argument and understanding of relevant research-based literature.

### ***Purpose of the Programme***

The principal purpose of this programme is to deepen students' understanding of healthcare ethics that are particularly relevant to the fields related to palliative care, and to enhance their ability to think systematically about the moral issues that healthcare professionals may face in the course of their work in this area. It can also provide a foundation for pursuing further study (for example, at doctoral level) for those interested in doing so.

### ***Keele Graduate Attributes***

Engagement with this programme will enable you to further develop your intellectual, personal and professional capabilities. At Keele, we call these our ten Graduate Attributes and they include independent thinking, synthesizing information, creative problem solving, communicating clearly, and appreciating the social, environmental and global implications of your studies and activities. Whilst you will undoubtedly have already developed these skills and abilities to varying degrees, such existing capabilities can always be deepened and enriched. Our educational programme and learning environment is designed to help you to develop further as a well-rounded postgraduate who is capable of making a positive and valued contribution in a complex and rapidly changing world, whichever spheres of life you engage in during and after your studies at Keele.

Please refer to the programme webpages for a statement of how you can achieve the Keele Graduate Attributes through full engagement in the programme and other educational opportunities at Keele.

## **2. How is the Programme taught?**

The MA in Medical Ethics and Palliative Care involves both taught sessions and a chance for students to write a dissertation on a topic of their choosing related to the programme. Teaching occurs in four three-day blocks (one teaching block per module) that run between September and May. This innovative structure has proved particularly popular with health care professionals in full-time employment as it allows students to combine study with full time work, and family and other commitments. It also enables students who are based in all areas of the UK and beyond to attend. Contact between students and staff, and between students, is facilitated between teaching blocks to create a distinctive student community.

The programme is divided into two parts – part 1 is a taught component that makes up the PGDip element of the programme. Part 2 is the MA dissertation component. Part 2 also has one 'study day' at which students are provided with training on how to research and write the dissertation, plus an opportunity to discuss their plans with the programme team and their peers.

Teaching for Part 1 of the programme is delivered in short intense blocks, enabling those in full-time employment to do the programme part time and fit it around the demands of their work wherever they are based. Each student is assigned a personal supervisor from the outset, whom they can contact for help or advice at any time during the programme.

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. Students come from a wide range of backgrounds within the field of health care and many diverse geographical locations. Past and current students have reported that meeting and exchanging ideas with others who work in different fields and in different parts of the country is one of the major benefits of the programme.

Part 2 of the programme requires students to undertake their own (library-based) research and write a dissertation on a topic of their choosing of between 15-20,000 words. Each student is allocated a supervisor for their dissertation who will help them with advice over topic choice and carrying out research. They will also comment on draft work in accordance with a prescribed service level and timetable.

### **Programme Team**

The Programme team consists of ethics and law lecturers from the School of Law at Keele University and clinical specialists in Palliative and End of Life Care from the School of Nursing and Midwifery. From time to time, external expert speakers may also be invited to speak on the programme. Many members of the teaching team have extensive experience of teaching postgraduate medical ethics courses. We are well aware of the special challenges that may face mature students and those combining study with full-time work; we do our utmost to offer a supportive and stimulating environment for learning.

Members of the teaching staff include specialists in ethics and medical law within the School of Law. Individual staff biographies can be found at: <http://www.keele.ac.uk/law/people/>

### **3. What is the Structure of the Programme?**

The MA programme consists of four 30-credit taught modules and a 60-credit dissertation, as follows:

Semester 1	ETH-40044	Moral Theory and Medical Ethics	30 credits
	ETH-40045	Principles of Medical Law	30 credits
Semester 2	ETH-40037	Ethical Issues in Care of the Dying	30 credits
	ETH-40036	Policy, Resource and Research Ethics in Palliative Care	30 credits
Full year	ETH-40041	Medical Ethics and Palliative Care Dissertation	60 credits

These may be taken by part-time, full-time or modular study. All the above modules are compulsory for the MA in Medical Ethics and Palliative Care (total: 180 credits). However, the Programme Director may exceptionally permit students to substitute suitable alternative modules (usually from the MA in Medical Ethics and Law), subject to the Intended Learning Outcomes of the programme being satisfied. The first two modules (ETH-40044 and ETH-40045) are shared with the MA in Medical Ethics and Law as these provide important groundwork in medical ethics and medical law.

Note that students taking the specific PG Certificate in Ethics in Palliative Care Pathway are required to register for the PG Certificate modules 1 and 3 (ETH-40047 and ETH-40049, respectively).

### **Part-time MA**

When taken part-time the four taught modules are completed in the first year, with the dissertation being completed in the second year. At the discretion of the Programme Director, students may exceptionally be permitted to defer the third or fourth module to their second year. The part-time mode of study is designed to meet the needs of healthcare practitioners and others who wish to combine study for the MA with full-time employment. The part time programme requires only 12 days attendance in year 1 and one day (a Research Methods study day in October) in year 2. Many second year students find it useful to come to Keele more frequently, to meet their

supervisors, attend talks by visiting speakers, and use other university facilities. Others, especially those who live some distance away, prefer to keep in touch via email or phone, or use a combination of methods.

**Full-time MA**

The full-time MA is completed in one year. Students begin work on the dissertation alongside the taught modules and submit it at the start of September.

**MA by modular study**

Students taking the MA by modular study may take one or more taught modules per year for a period of up to four years, followed by the dissertation in the subsequent year (a maximum five years in total). The Semester 1 modules must normally be completed before the Semester 2 modules (exceptionally, at the discretion of the Programme Director, these modules may be taken in a different order). For students who do not wish to take the full programme but wish to study various modules from the programme, it is a prerequisite that module 1 (ETH-40044) be completed before any other modules are taken (exceptionally, at the discretion of the Programme Director, this requirement may be waived, for example, in the case of a student who has already completed an equivalent module in medical ethics from another programme).

**Intercalated MA**

Medical students can opt to take a year out of their undergraduate studies in order to study a subject area in greater depth, before returning to complete their medical degree. Intercalating students take the full-time MA in Medical Ethics and Palliative Care to ensure that the programme is completed within one year.

**PG Certificate in Ethics in Palliative Care Pathway**

The PG Certificate in Ethics in Palliative Care Pathway is designed to meet the needs of professionals working in Hospice or other palliative care settings who do not wish to undertake the full MA but would like to receive training in ethical issues relevant to their professional practice while continuing in full-time employment. Students taking the Pathway are required to register for the modules 1 and 3 (ETH-40047 and ETH-40049, respectively). These two modules are run together with the existing MA modules 1 and 3 (ETH-40044 and ETH-40037, respectively) and therefore provide identical taught content, while requiring students on this pathway take an alternative assessment regime to reflect application of learning in professional practice. This pathway may be studied either part-time, with both modules taken over the course of one year, or modularly, with one module taken in different years. It is a prerequisite that module 1 (ETH-40047) be completed before any other modules are taken (exceptionally, at the discretion of the Programme Director, this requirement may be waived).

Learning Outcomes	Module in which this is delivered	Principal forms of assessment (of the Learning Outcome) used
An understanding of important theories and arguments in applied ethics and/or law, and of their relevance to healthcare practice and policy in palliative care	Taught modules, dissertation	Essays, dissertation, reflective diary (for those on PG Cert pathway)
A detailed knowledge and understanding of selected key arguments and issues in medical ethics with a focus on palliative care	Taught modules, dissertation	Essays, dissertation
The ability to understand and critically evaluate complex ethical and legal texts, including contemporary research-based materials, and primary legal materials (e.g. cases and statutes).	Taught modules, dissertation	Essays, dissertation
The ability to apply ethical and/or legal theories and arguments to practical problems in healthcare practice and policy in palliative care, to construct ethical or legal arguments in written form, and to defend those arguments against criticism	Taught modules, dissertation	Essays, dissertation, reflective diary (for those on PG Cert pathway)

The ability to conduct a detailed and systematic investigation of an ethical and/or legal problem and to reach conclusions based on sound argument and understanding of relevant research-based literature.	Taught modules, dissertation	Essays, dissertation
---	------------------------------	----------------------

***Exit Routes and Awards: Postgraduate Diploma and Postgraduate Certificate***

The successful completion of the Dissertation (60 Credits) in addition to the 4 taught modules (120 credits), leads to the award of an MA (180 credits). Some students may not want to do the entire MA Programme or may be prevented by personal circumstances from progressing to year 2 of the part time programme. These students may exit the programme after completing the taught modules. Successful completion of all four taught modules (120 credits) leads to the award of a Postgraduate Diploma (PGDip) in Medical Ethics and Palliative Care; while successful completion of any two taught modules (60 credits) leads to the award of a Postgraduate Certificate (PGCert) in Medical Ethics and Palliative Care.

Credits cannot be awarded for the dissertation if all of the four taught modules are not successfully completed.

***For those registered for the Postgraduate Certificate in Ethics in Palliative Care***

The successful completion of the two taught modules ETH-40047 and ETH-40049 (60 credits) leads to the award of a Postgraduate Certificate (PGCert) in Ethics in Palliative Care.

As these two modules have the same taught content and modular credit as modules 1 and 3 on the MA in Ethics and Palliative Care (ETH-40044 and ETH-40037), it would be possible for those who have successfully completed modules ETH-40047 and ETH-40049 to return to study for the MA in Medical Ethics and Palliative Care with two of the four taught modules of the MA already completed. In line with the requirements above, successful completion of the remaining taught modules (module 2 ETH-40045 and module 4 ETH-40036) would lead to the award of Postgraduate Diploma (PGDip) in Medical Ethics and Palliative Care (totalling 120 credits from taught modules). Successful subsequent completion of the dissertation module ETH-40041 (60 credits) would lead to the award of MA (180 credits in total). All modules would have to be completed within the five-year limit for modular study.

**4. How is the Programme assessed?**

Each of the four taught modules is assessed through a 5,000-word essay. The essay question is chosen from a list reflecting the main themes of the module, enabling students to focus on the issues that are most interesting to them or relevant to their work. For each essay, students also submit a plan on which written comments will be provided by a member of the teaching team. In addition, students receive written feedback on each of their essays, aimed at helping them to improve their performance as they progress through the programme, and have the opportunity to discuss the feedback with their supervisor.

The dissertation gives students a chance to undertake a more extended piece of work (between 15,000 and 20,000 words) on an approved topic of their choice in any area of medical ethics relevant to palliative care. Students are not permitted to undertake primary empirical research involving human subjects as part of this programme. Students are supported by a supervisor who will provide feedback on a plan and draft chapters and offer general advice on researching and writing the dissertation.

***Postgraduate Certificate in Ethics in Palliative Care***

Each of the taught modules ETH-40047 and ETH-40049 is assessed through a 3,000-word essay and a Reflective Diary of up to 2,000 words.

The essay question is chosen from a list reflecting the main themes of the module, enabling students to focus on the issues that are most interesting to them or relevant to their work. For each essay, students also submit a plan on which written comments will be provided by a member of the teaching team. In addition, students receive written feedback on each of their essays, aimed at helping them to improve their performance as they progress through the programme, and have the opportunity to discuss the feedback with their supervisor.

The Reflective Diary is a written record of how the knowledge developed through the course has interacted with the student's professional experiences of ethical dilemmas faced at the end of life. The content of this diary is assessed

through an oral slide presentation on a designated presentation day (usually in December for module ETH-40047 and in March for module ETH-40049).

## **5. What are the typical admission requirements for the programme?**

The MA in Medical Ethics and Palliative Care and its PGCert pathway in Ethics in Palliative Care is open to graduates with a first or second class honours degree (or international equivalent) in a relevant subject, or appropriate professional qualifications and/or experience.

Candidates undertaking the degree in Medical Ethics and Palliative Care may, under exceptional circumstances, apply for the Recognition of Prior Learning. Applications should be made before commencing the programme. The University's policy on this issue can be found via <http://www.keele.ac.uk/qa/accrreditationofpriorlearning/>.

Applicants for whom English is not a first language must provide evidence of a qualification in English language, unless they hold a previous degree that was taught and examined in English. The minimum score for entry to the MA is academic IELTS 6.5 (with no subtest below 5.5) or equivalent.

## **6. How are students supported on the programme?**

Each student is allocated a personal supervisor from the programme team whose role is to assist students with academic and pastoral problems, to provide individual advice and discuss the written feedback that will be provided for each assignment, and to provide general academic advice and support. The supervisor is the 'first contact' for all academic matters and any personal problems; he or she is the student's most important source of information and advice, and is likely to be the person that they have most contact with at Keele. During the taught part of the programme students normally meet with their supervisor during each of the teaching blocks. Contact is also maintained via email and telephone, and additional meetings can be arranged as appropriate. During the dissertation stage the supervisor will provide advice and feedback on dissertation plans and draft chapters. The Programme Director is available to give advice if a student has a problem that cannot be resolved by the supervisor.

Students receive guidance during the first teaching block on how to identify, locate and use materials (including electronic resources) available in Keele University Library and elsewhere.

Guidelines are provided for the production of coursework assignments and dissertations and these are reinforced by assignment guidance and feedback sessions in each teaching block, the Research Methods study day at the start of the dissertation stage, and by individual supervisors.

Students whose first language is not English are offered language classes, facilities and services by the University's Language Centre. Following diagnostic English language assessment, students may be required or recommended to take English language classes offered by the Language Centre. In addition to modules on English for academic study, students have access to one-to-one tutorials for individual help and advice and to a wealth of resources for self-study and practice. Any student, international or otherwise, can request a 30 min 1-1 session if they need it. Students requiring English language support (on testing) will be allocated to one or two of the following modules:

- ENL-40001: Academic English for Postgraduate Students 1 - semester 1
- ENL-40004: Academic English for Postgraduate Students 1-B - semester 2
- ENL-40002: Academic English for Postgraduate Students 2 - semester 1 or 2

For students required to undertake these English Language modules, determination of progression to the dissertation module will include an evaluation of the student's engagement and performance on the respective English Language modules.

Central university services available to all students including the counselling services, disability and dyslexia support, international student support and careers and employability can be contacted via the Student Services Centre at <https://www.keele.ac.uk/students/student-services/>

## **7. Learning Resources**

### ***The Keele Learning Environment (KLE)***

This is an online resource that is used to host programme handbooks and guides, timetables, handouts and slides, and other materials, and for electronic submission of assignments and dissertations. It also provides discussion boards that students can use to continue discussion and maintain contact, and as a forum for discussing the programme, between teaching blocks.

### ***Libraries and Electronic Resources***

Keele University Library has many resources for your subject, both on campus and online. Further information about the library can be found at: <https://www.keele.ac.uk/library/>. Because many students on the MA in Medical Ethics and Palliative Care are based away from Keele, we endeavour, as far as possible, to recommend reading materials available in the library's e-journal and e-book collections, which can be accessed from off-campus using a Keele student username and password. The library also operates a postal lending service for a fee.

You can access the various materials available on-line using the recommended username and password. Details on these are available from the Library website at: <http://www.keele.ac.uk/library/support/access>.

In addition to Keele's library, students can also make use of more than 170 libraries of other higher education institutions in the UK and Ireland via the SCONUL Access scheme.

### ***Computer facilities***

For information about IT Services please consult the IT Services website: <http://www.keele.ac.uk/it/>. IT Services is located in the Library building and is responsible for the computing infrastructure in the university and for the support of all staff and students undertaking academic computing tasks.

There are a large number of 'open access' PCs available for students. All student PCs use a standard platform, which includes software such as Microsoft Office, web browsers, and other standard applications you may need. Printing facilities are available in the library building. You must ensure that you have read the Conditions of use of the Computer Facilities.

## **8. Other learning opportunities**

Each year we run a series of lectures on Health Care Ethics and Law sponsored by the Royal Institute of Philosophy, in which speakers from other universities present aspects of their work for a public audience and all are open to our students.

Students are also welcome to attend events organised by the Research Centre for Law, Ethics and Society. These include talks by visiting speakers, and work-in-progress seminars at which members of the Centre present their current work.

A non-assessed online module entitled 'A Rough Guide to Law for Non-Law Students' is available on the Keele Learning Environment to help students without a background in law to prepare for their first law teaching.

It is possible for students to register on a single module (modular programme of study) for Continuing Professional Development or other purposes. Students may choose to attend the module without completing the assessment but no credits would be awarded for this. Students should contact the postgraduate administrator ([law.postgrad@keele.ac.uk](mailto:law.postgrad@keele.ac.uk)) for further information.

There is an active research community within the School of Law and postgraduate students are invited to participate in the wide range of seminars and other research activities, such as workshops and academic conferences held at Keele. There are also other lectures and research seminars organised in Schools and Research Institutes within the University that may be of interest to you. You will be informed of these via your Keele email address.

## **9. Quality management and enhancement**

The Programme Director, who oversees the programme team, is responsible for the day-to-day management of the programme. The Director, in turn, reports to the Head of School who has ultimate management responsibility for the

Programme. The programme is further supported by the Taught Postgraduate Committee, which comprises representatives from each of the taught postgraduate programmes in the school and is chaired by the School Director of Postgraduate Studies.

The programme is reviewed at regular intervals through a combination of methods used to identify teaching strengths and areas of development. To ensure that the MA in the Medical Ethics and Palliative Care maintains the highest possible standards, the programme employs the following procedures:

- Student evaluation of teaching. Students have the opportunity to evaluate each module and the overall programme. Data from the evaluations are circulated to staff and discussed in annual programme review meetings.
- Peer observation of teaching. The academic staff responsible for delivering the programme undertake regular peer observation of teaching that is used to identify teaching strengths and areas of development.
- Student Voice Representatives are elected by students at the beginning of each year, represent students on the Student: Staff Voice Committee and act as a channel of communication between students and staff.
- Student: Staff Voice Committee. This is an integral part of the monitoring and review procedures and provides a valuable source of management data for the programme team. It provides a forum for student representatives to raise any issues that need to be brought to the attention of the Programme Director.
- External Examiners. The MA in Medical Ethics and Palliative Care has one external examiner. Their role is to ensure that assessment processes are fair and rigorous, and that standards are in line with national guidelines and comparable with other institutions.
- Annual Programme Review. The programme team meets to review student evaluations, student performance, external examiners' reports and to consider changes to the programme.

## 10. The principles of programme design

Important principles of design for this programme include: (a) research-led teaching; (b) interactivity where practicable; (c) interdisciplinary (especially with respect to ethics, law, and medicine). In addition, the programme has been designed in relation to the following documents:

- Programme Specification Template Keele University, 2019.
- UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Quality Assurance Agency: <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code>
- Keele University Learning and Teaching Strategy 2015-2020

## 11. Programme Version History

Version History	Date	CHANGES / NOTES
Date first created	Nov 2012	For the 2013-14 academic year, the programme changed its name from 'The Ethics of Cancer and Palliative Care' to 'Medical Ethics and Palliative Care'
Revision history	12/12/2016	Removal of wording involving collaborative teaching arrangement with Marie Curie Palliative Care Institute, Liverpool. Replaced with all teaching from Keele University.  Sharing of modules 1 and 2 with Medical Ethics and Law MA Programme. Updating of ILOs to reflect this.  Assessments brought into line with those of Medical Ethics and Law MA Programme (increase in essay length and requirement for formative essay plans).  Minor updates of relevant information and

		materials (dates, descriptions, codes, links, etc.) in line with latest Programme Specification Template, clarification of modular route, and inclusion of Language Centre provision for English language support.
Revision history	21/05/2019	<p>Addition of the Postgraduate Certificate in Ethics in Palliative Care pathway.</p> <p>Addition of parallel modules 1 and 3 (ETH-40047 and ETH-40049) for the new pathway, together with modified assessment regime for these two modules.</p>
Date approved by FLTC	June 2019	