

Quality Assurance

Masters, Postgraduate Certificate in Philosophy

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.

Please note that this programme specification applies to students starting the programme from September 2021 onwards.

Introduction

This document provides a summary of the main features of the postgraduate taught MRes in Philosophy. It explains what a student can expect from studying Philosophy at Masters level at Keele University, and includes information about what a student will be able to do if s/he takes full advantage of the opportunities provided during the course of this programme.

Names of programmes	- MRes Philosophy - Postgraduate Certificate in Philosophy
Mode of study	Full-time and part-time
Duration	One year full-time / two years part-time

1. What is the philosophy of the Programme?

The educational aims of the MRes in Philosophy are to provide students with an intensive period of study in which they can engage with specific issues in a systematic and disciplined manner, and for students to gain a thorough grounding in the theoretical and practical issues underpinning study and research in Philosophy. Given the nature of an MRes programme, particular emphasis is put on research: with a high component of dedicated research training modules designed to equip students with additional skills required to carry out research in Philosophy and a 25,000-word dissertation to be completed by the end of the programme.

The modules in the School of Social, Political and Global Studies (SPGS) are taught by research specialists, offering students their subject-specific knowledge and delivering the programme in engaging ways. The programmes will provide students with the opportunity to develop their own research and study interests, while also providing students with access to learning about a broader range of important issues in Philosophy.

This programme offers students the opportunity to produce a substantial piece of independent research and writing, and to develop research skills in Philosophy. It forms an excellent foundation to doctoral (PhD) work. It is also ideal for students who wish to undertake an independent research project in Philosophy for personal and professional

development. It encourages practical, analytic and critical research skills and project management capacity relevant to a variety of professional and intellectual contexts.

By the end of their studies, students will have the ability to construct, develop and write a relatively extended dissertation based on independent research. They will also have a critical understanding of the sources and resources available for the dissertation and the methodological debates relevant to it.

Students will be able to locate the place of a specific research topic within current debates and methodologies within Philosophy and social sciences and humanities more generally, as well as to apply key research methodologies and research strategies in order to develop their own subject-specific interests and to undertake independent research work.

Students will be able to manage the project of a relatively extended dissertation, including defining and planning the project, meeting deadlines, and recording and reflecting on outcomes.

In addition, students will be able to manage their own time effectively, develop their communication skills (written and oral), and enhance their group-work skills, as well as being able to discuss and comment upon important issues in their pathway.

What is the principal purpose of the programme?

The MRes in Philosophy offers students the opportunity to produce a substantial piece of independent research and writing under the supervision of specialised scholars, and to undertake systematic training in research skills in Philosophy. Students will plan, research and write an extended dissertation, locating their respective topic within the context of relevant debates within Philosophy and the social sciences and humanities more generally. The course is an ideal preparation for students who wish to proceed to doctoral research in Philosophy, and also develops practical, critical and analytic research skills that can be deployed in a variety of professional and intellectual contexts. It also provides students with the opportunities to enhance their oral and written communication skills, as well as their team-working and individual organisational capabilities.

Graduate Attributes

Engagement with this programme will enable students to further develop their 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 one's studies and activities. The MRes in Philosophy is designed to help students develop further as well-rounded postgraduates capable of making a positive and valued contribution in a complex and rapidly changing world, whichever spheres of life they engage in during and after their studies at Keele.

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

2. How is the Programme taught?

The MRes in Philosophy is delivered through taught sessions for each module, and comprises lectures, large and small group work and guided independent study.

The taught sessions are critical to the delivery of the programmes as they provide a forum to:

- Develop a structure for the critical analysis of debates around specific issues of interests within philosophy;
- Pursue further various key elements within the programme of study;

- Share ideas with tutors and fellow students;
- Develop further, in a supportive atmosphere, research skills, including knowledge of significant methodologies within Philosophy and more generally social sciences and humanities;
- Learn co-operatively in a general forum for active learning, discussion and debate.

Further support is provided through self-study materials that comprise both traditional text-based and electronic resources that are accessed through the Keele Learning Environment; this latter resource will also be used to enhance student support during the period of the course.

An innovative feature of this programme is the module 'Philosophy of the Social Sciences', which is a compulsory core for the programme. This is a year-long module. In the first part, students become familiar with significant methodological issues within social sciences and humanities more generally. In the second part of the module, students undertake guided reflection on the methodological issues relevant to their dissertation topic.

The second core module, 'Metaphilosophy' enables students to reflect on, and gain knowledge and experience of, the nature of philosophy and the main methodological issues relevant for philosophical debates. In addition to the 'Philosophy of the Social Sciences' Module, the 'Metaphilosophy' Module will enable students to gain further knowledge of research methods in philosophy, which is an important learning outcome of the programme.

A further innovative feature is the compulsory core module 'Individual Research Orientation in Philosophy'. This module encourages students, through independent work guided by the dissertation supervisor, to develop independent strategies for managing their own academic interests and research. Through this module, students start research in a topic which will represent some of the background for their dissertation. Together with the 'Philosophy of the Social Sciences' Module, this Module contributes to the research training provided to students as part of the MRes Programme.

Teaching staff in SPGS and other schools, who have research interests in philosophy or at the intersection of philosophy and other disciplines are available to contribute to teaching on the MRes in Philosophy, as either convenors of modules, contributors to team-taught courses, or as prospective supervisors for individual dissertations.

The staff group has extensive experience of teaching at undergraduate and postgraduate level, and at conducting supervision at Masters and PhD level, in universities in the UK and continental Europe. All of the teaching staff contributing to the MRes have completed training as part of their induction to University teaching. All are members or associates of the Higher Education Academy and/or have a formal teaching qualification.

Further information about the Philosophy staff teaching on the programme can be found at: keele.ac.uk/spire/staff Political philosophers from the Politics and IR Programmes or social philosophers from Sociology might also contribute to teaching and supervision.

3. What is the Structure of the Programme?

All students take three compulsory core modules (for a total of 90 credits): Metaphilosophy (30 credits); Philosophy of the Social Sciences (30 credits); Individual Research Orientation in Philosophy (30 credits). All these modules are dedicated MRes modules designed to equip the students with additional skills in research.

In order to graduate with an MRes degree, students must undertake a dissertation on a topic in Philosophy. This is part of the 'Dissertation' Module (90 credits).

The full-time MRes structure in tabular form

There will be two entry points: September and January.

Full-time students will begin the academic year in the Autumn Semester and complete it in the Summer Semester. Students joining the programme in January will begin the academic year in the Spring Semester and complete it in the Autumn Semester.

Autumn semester	Spring Semester	Summer Semester
Metaphilosophy (30 Credits)	Individual Research Orientation in Philosophy (30 Credits)	Dissertation (90 Credits: 25,000 words)
Philosophy of the Social Sciences (Part I) (Parts I&II: 30 Credits)	Philosophy of the Social Sciences (Part II) (Parts I&II: 30 Credits)	

Pathways for students registered on the part-time MRes

Part-time students registered on the MRes will typically take the three compulsory core modules in the autumn and spring semesters of two academic years and will complete the Dissertation Module in the summer of the second academic year.

The part-time MRes structure in tabular form

There will be two entry points: September and January.

Part-time students will begin the academic year in the Autumn Semester and complete it in the Summer Semester. Students joining the programme in January will begin the academic year in the Spring Semester and complete it in the Autumn Semester.

Autumn Semester	Spring Semester	Summer Semester
Year One		
Metaphilosophy (30 Credits)	Individual Research Orientation in Philosophy (30 Credits)	
Year Two		
Philosophy of the Social Sciences (Part I) (Parts I&II: 30 Credits)	Philosophy of the Social Sciences (Part II) (Parts I&II: 30 Credits)	Dissertation (90 credits: 25,000 words)

Learning Outcomes

Learning Outcome	Module in which this is delivered	Principal forms of assessment (of the Learning Outcome) used
Demonstrate systematic knowledge of and critically evaluate advanced scholarship and recent research in philosophical themes, issues, theories and debates, much of which is at, or informed by, the forefront of the academic discipline	All modules	Essays, dissertation
Demonstrate systematic knowledge of, and critically evaluate, the methodologies applicable to research and advanced scholarship in philosophy	Metaphilosophy Individual Research Orientation in Philosophy Dissertation	Essays, dissertation
Demonstrate systematic knowledge of, and critically evaluate, the methodologies applicable to research and advanced scholarship in philosophy, and social sciences and humanities more generally	Philosophy of the Social Sciences Metaphilosophy	Essays
Systematically and creatively assess the relationships between methods of and approaches to knowledge generation and interpretations of that knowledge in philosophical themes, issues, theories and debates	Metaphilosophy Individual Research Orientation in Philosophy	Essays
Demonstrate self-direction and originality in employing strategies to address philosophical problems, issues, theories or debates	All modules	Essays, dissertation
Systematically evaluate complex issues and critically evaluate arguments about a chosen research topic or philosophy in general	All modules	Essays, dissertation
Communicate appropriately through use of higher level writing skills, aimed at specialist and non-specialist audiences, with appropriate use of academic referencing	All modules	Essays, dissertation

Communicate appropriately, convincingly and fluently, in oral presentation	Metaphilosophy Philosophy of the Social Sciences Individual Research Orientation in Philosophy	Presentations Contributions to class debates
Systematically apply research or methodological skills and knowledge in order further to advance knowledge of a chosen research area	Dissertation	Dissertation

Exit Awards

Postgraduate Certificate in Philosophy

A student can be awarded a Postgraduate Certificate when they have successfully accumulated 90 credits at Level 7. This could be achieved by completing the three core modules of the programme.

Dissertation credits are excluded from the award of a Postgraduate Certificate.

MRes in Philosophy

A student can be awarded an MRes if they complete 180 credits at Level 7 including the dissertation.

4. How is the Programme assessed?

The programme is primarily assessed through written work, mainly essays on particular topics and the dissertation. The written work enables assessment of the student's understanding of the module content, of the student's analytical abilities, as well as evaluation of particular debates, arguments or ideas. Some of the essays and the dissertation facilitate assessment of the student's ability to select, apply and evaluate appropriate research methodologies to a chosen field of study.

The essay for Part I of the 'Philosophy of the Social Sciences' Module will be an opportunity to discuss a methodological school or an issue related to a particular methodology in social sciences and humanities more generally. The essay for 'Metaphilosophy' will focus on a specific methodological issue in philosophy, particularly an issue concerning the nature of philosophy. Assessment for these modules will be an opportunity to address subject knowledge concerning research methods, but also generic study skills issues such as referencing, quoting, selecting relevant material, answering the question set, and any issues of written English that may arise.

Students are specifically supported in the preparation of their dissertation by Part II of the module 'Philosophy of the Social Sciences' and by the module 'Individual Research Orientation in Philosophy'. In the second part of the 'Philosophy of the Social Sciences' Module, students will focus on the specific topic of their dissertation and will reflect with the guidance from their prospective supervisor on the methodological issues raised by it. The 'Individual Research Orientation' Module will enable students to carry out guided research on a background issue for their dissertation.

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

Students should have a good degree, 2:2 minimum, from an awarding UK institution, or its equivalent. It is not necessary to hold the degree in philosophy. For students who fall short of this requirement, relevant work experience, or evidence of experience in the field, can be considered as an alternative.

Students for whom English is not the first language are required to take one of the internationally recognised English language tests such as Academic IELTS or equivalent English language qualification. The minimum entry level is IELTS 6.5 with a minimum of 5.5 in each subtest, or equivalent English language test scores.

6. How are students supported on the programme?

Each student is allocated a member of the programme team as a Personal Tutor. Meetings are arranged for the tutee to meet with their tutor, normally face to face, to review overall progress. Extra meetings can be scheduled following the completion of the formative assessment in the first semester in order to discuss any issues that arise.

A named tutor will also be available to provide pastoral support for students registered on the programme.

Students are given written feedback on their written work, and are encouraged to meet with their module tutor to discuss the feedback. Students can also consult their personal tutor about any feedback or any academic issue about which they require further clarification.

Students whose first language is not English are offered language classes, facilities and services by the University's Language Centre. In addition to credit-bearing modules on English for academic study, students also have access to one-to-one tutorials for individual help and advice, and to a wealth of resources for self-study and practice.

7. Learning Resources

The main body of the course is delivered through self-study materials, which comprise mainly traditional text-based resources available in the library and through e-journals, supported by, where appropriate, electronic resources accessed through the Keele Learning Environment.

The latter resource is also used to enhance student support during the period of the course, in particular through SPIRE's on-line study skills module, Effective Communication for Students.

Keele University Library

The Library has many resources for your subject, both on campus and online. Further information about the library can be found at: <http://www.keele.ac.uk/library>

To access online library services off campus you will need an Athens username and password, which is available from the computer help desk.

Computer facilities

IT Services is located in the library building. The IT Services Department 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.

Opening Hours: in order to check if the computer facilities and the Help Desk are open, you should telephone: 01782 733636 or 783535. Further information can be found at: <http://www.keele.ac.uk/it/>

8. Other learning opportunities

Each academic year, SPGS and Philosophy in particular organise a series of research seminars at which researchers present their work. Students are encouraged to attend in order to access current research in a range of areas. The programmes for this are published in the autumn and new year. SPGS students are also able to attend the renowned World Affairs series, at which nationally and internationally recognised speakers give lectures on international and political topics. Other lectures and research seminars take place within the School and the Research Centres within the University that may also prove interesting for the students.

Of particular interest for the MRes in Philosophy students are the events organised by the Forum for Philosophical Research and the Keele-Oxford-St Andrews Kantian (KOSAK) Research Centre. The Forum and KOSAK are research centres for philosophy, which organise the Royal Institute of Philosophy Invited Lecture Series, the postgraduate research seminars series, the 'Jean-Jacques Rousseau' Annual Lecture and Conference, the Summer School in Methods in Normative Political Philosophy, reading groups and other special lectures. Students will be kept informed of such events via their Keele email addresses.

9. Quality management and enhancement

The Programme Board, which comprises the academic staff who are responsible for the taught modules, is responsible for the day to day management of the programme; the Programme Director chairs this body and reports to the School's Education Committee, where programme specifications, Annual Programme Review and minutes of the Student: Staff Voice Committee are considered.

The programme is monitored and reviewed in the following ways:

- Student evaluation of teaching: students have the opportunity to evaluate each module and the programme. Data from the evaluations is reported at regular programme board 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: 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.
- Annual Programme Review: a range of data is used to inform the annual programme review; it comprises student evaluations, external examiner's report, academic and pastoral tutor reports and internal programme review and monitoring data.
- The programme is run in accordance with the University's Quality Assurance procedures and is subject to periodic reviews under the Internal Quality Audit (IQA) process.

Students are represented in the management of the programme through representation at the Student: Staff Voice Committee, and through attendance at relevant programme boards (e.g. Annual Review).

10. The principles of programme design

The programme has also been designed with reference to, and in accordance with the guidance set out in the following documents:

- UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Quality Assurance Agency
- There is no subject benchmark in this area.
- The degree is not linked to a professional association for accreditation.
- Feedback has been sought from student representatives through Student:Staff Voice Committee.

11. Date on which programme specification was written or revised

Version History	Date	Changes/Notes
Date first created	December 2017	Changes of School from School of Humanities to SPIRE
Revision history	February 2018	
Date approved by the SLTC	December 2017	
Date approved by FLTC	February 2018	
Updated	February 2021	Introduction of a January entry point for full-time students; various revisions (for instance, as a result of the creation of SPGS as a new School including SPIRE).