



## Philosophy Master's Dissertation Course Descriptor

Course Title	Philosophy Master's Dissertation	Faculty	Philosophy
Course Code	NCHPH721	Course Leader	
Credit Points	60	Teaching Period	Any
FHEQ Level	Level 7	Date Approved	June 2020
Compulsory/ Optional	Compulsory		
Pre-requisites	NCHPH731 Mind and Reality, NCHPH734 Values and Society <sup>1</sup> NCHAI749 AI and Data Ethics, NCHAI750 Minds and Machines <sup>2</sup>		
Co-requisites	None		

### COURSE SUMMARY

In the final section of the MA, students write a 10,000–12,000-word philosophy dissertation on an approved topic of their choice and defend it in a *viva voce* exam. Students are prepared for this endeavour in part by the earlier 'Mind and Reality' and 'Values and Society' seminars, which provide an advanced introduction to academic philosophical writing, research, and presentation skills. Students are also prepared in part by the earlier optional modules in which they write essays and defend them in individual tutorials and develop their background philosophical knowledge more generally. In the dissertation module, after an initial group seminar with the course leader, students meet with an assigned supervisor to finalize their proposal and to discuss and refine successive drafts. Once the dissertation has been submitted, students defend it in a 50-minute *viva voce* exam.

### COURSE AIMS

The aims of this course are:

- To enable students to form and defend their own estimates of the merits of alternative positions in a philosophical area of their choice, and develop a sustained line of philosophical argument.

<sup>1</sup> Applies to NCHPHMF and NCHPHMP MA Philosophy and NCHAIMF and NCHAIMP MA Philosophy and AI

<sup>2</sup> Applies to NCHAIMF and NCHAIMP MA Philosophy and AI only

- To promote students' ability to present their ideas clearly, in both written and oral formats.
- To prepare students for doctoral studies in philosophy as well as a wide range of careers and roles in society.

## **LEARNING OUTCOMES**

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

### **KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING**

- K1d Show self-direction in identifying, analyzing, and interpreting philosophical material at the forefront of the discipline so as to contribute to a key philosophical debate.
- K2d Demonstrate detailed critical engagement with the texts and theories of a range of key figures in a specially chosen area of philosophy.
- K3d Demonstrate a sophisticated understanding of truth-preserving patterns of inference in developing a defense of a contentious position in some area of philosophy and/or its history.

### **SUBJECT-SPECIFIC SKILLS**

- S1d Effectively navigate philosophical resources, such as JSTOR, the Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, Academia.edu, the Institute of Philosophy, PhilPapers, and Google Scholar to identify, clarify, and situate ideas and arguments relating to a key issue in philosophy and/or its history.
- S2d Engage with material at the forefront of the discipline, selecting and analysing information, questioning assumptions, and critically evaluating competing methodologies, sources of data and arguments in relation to a specific issue in philosophy and/or its history.
- S3d Identify and employ a range of philosophical devices to develop a sustained piece of independent research in both written and oral formats.

### **TRANSFERABLE AND PROFESSIONAL SKILLS**

- T1d Show self-direction in working independently, creatively, and to deadlines.
- T2d Source, organize, and synthesize information, question assumptions, and engage with competing arguments.
- T3d Display self-direction to produce a clear, sophisticated, and persuasive piece of written work on a complex topic, and present and defend its central ideas orally in a viva voce examination.
- T3d Consistently apply an excellent level of technical proficiency in written English, using an advanced application of scholarly terminology, that demonstrates the ability to deal with complex issues both systematically and with sophistication
- T4d Demonstrate resilience and ingenuity in the face of difficulties in designing, pursuing and delivering a sustained piece of independent research.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Module-specific teaching and learning methods will be by:

- Group seminar
- Independent (though guided) study and research
- Individual supervision (which supports both writing and oral communication skills)
- Individual written feedback
- Online discussion forum

Course information and supplementary materials are available on the College's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE).

Students are required to attend and participate in all the formal and timetabled sessions for this course. Students are also expected to manage their directed learning and independent study in support of the course.

## EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS

Completing a Master's dissertation in philosophy cultivates skills that are employable across a range of sectors. These include the abilities to:

- Work independently, creatively, and to deadlines
- Conduct research and explore relevant existing knowledge
- Analyse, contextualise, and interpret complex ideas and materials
- Synthesise and evaluate information against a backdrop of uncertainty
- Solve problems through logical reasoning
- Present findings and opinions in a clear, structured manner, whether orally or in writing
- Engage in collaborative and constructive discussion

## ASSESSMENT

### FORMATIVE

Students' successive partial drafts will be formatively assessed during the course. These assessments do not count towards the end of year results, but will provide students with developmental feedback, both written and oral.

### SUMMATIVE

Assessment will be in two forms:

AE:	Assessment Activity	Weighting (%)	Online submission	Duration	Length
1	Dissertation	80%	Yes	N/A	10000-12000 words
2	Viva Voce Exam	20%	N/A	50 minutes	N/A

Both the dissertation and the viva voce exam will be assessed in accordance with the assessment aims set out in the Programme Specification.

### **FEEDBACK**

Students will receive formal feedback in a variety of ways: written (in comments on draft material, including via email correspondence); oral (within one-to-one supervision tutorials, and on an *ad hoc* basis).

Feedback is provided on summative assessment and is made available to the student either via email, the VLE or another appropriate method.

### **INDICATIVE READING**

Reading is to be decided upon between student and supervisor, depending on the chosen dissertation topic.

### **INDICATIVE TOPICS**

The topics to be covered will vary between dissertations, but typically the student will proceed in the following stages:

- Proposal
  - First Draft
  - Second Draft
  - Third Draft
  - Final Draft
  - Submission
  - *Viva Voce* Exam
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<b>Title: NCHPH721 Philosophy Master's Dissertation Course Descriptor</b>					
<b>Approved by: Academic Board</b>					
<b>Location: Academic Handbook/Programme specifications and Handbooks/ Postgraduate Programme Specifications/MA Philosophy Programme Specification/Philosophy Course Descriptors</b>					
Version number	Date approved	Date published	Owner	Proposed next review date	Modification (As per AQF4) & category number
2.0	January 2022	April 2022	Brian Ball	April 2025	Category 3: Changes to Course Learning Outcomes
1.1	September 2020	January 2021	Brian Ball	April 2025	Category 2: Approved by Academic Board (10th September 2020).  Minute 7.61.4 Master's Taught Awards – Pre-/co-requisites would be implemented in courses that were required to be passed by students in order to progress to the Dissertation course.
1.0	June 2020	June 2020	Brian Ball	April 2025	