

Undergraduate Teaching in Philosophy

A Guide for New Academic Staff

Damian Caluori, Undergraduate Teaching Director, 29.8.2023. V2.1.

1. Degree Programmes and Courses

1.1. Degree Programmes

We offer one single honours philosophy degree programme and a number of joint honours degree programmes. You can find information about each programme in the DRPS (Degree Regulations and Programmes of Study; see glossary for a link). For information about courses offered in particular degree programmes, see the DPT (Degree Programme Table).

In Scotland, UG degrees include four years of study. The degree is awarded as an MA (Hons). The first two years are called “pre-honours”, and years 3 and 4 are called “honours”. In the first two years, students typically take about half of their courses in their subject area or areas (e.g., in Philosophy or in Philosophy & Economics). In years 3 and 4, they take all (or almost all) their courses in their subject area or areas.

1.2. Credits

Almost all our courses are worth 20 credits. The exceptions are a zero-credit dissertation preparation course in year 3 and a 40 credit Dissertation course in year 4 (for which see 1.6). Moreover, there is a 40-credit online course “Philosophy Work” for language & philosophy students in their year abroad. A student must take 120 credits/year (6 courses).

1.3. Required and optional courses

In years 1, single honours students are required to take *Morality & Value* (MV), *Logic*, and *Introduction to the History of Philosophy A or B* (IHOP A/B). In year 2, they are required to take *Mind, Matter and Language* (MML) and *Knowledge and Reality* (K&R). All students have the option of taking *Philosophy of Science* in year 1 or year 2. They also have the option of taking the version of IHOP in year 2 that they have not taken in year 1. In year 3, there is a disjunctive requirement: students choose courses worth between 20-60 credits from each of four categories (Language Cognition, Science/History of Philosophy/Knowledge and Reality/Morality and Value). In year 4, there are no required courses and there is no distribution requirement, but students must write an Undergraduate Dissertation (see 1.6). The requirements for students on joint degrees vary (see DPT for details). Honours student can only choose courses from their year: A 3rd-year student cannot take a 4th-year course and vice versa.

1.4. Pre-honours courses

Pre-honours courses consist of three weekly lectures of one hour (i.e., 50 minutes) each plus tutorials. Each student attends the lectures and one weekly tutorial. These courses are large, with enrolments of several hundred students. Each tutorial has a cap of 16 students. The lectures are typically given by two members of the department one of which functions as Course Organiser (CO), except for Logic whose CO is the only lecturer. In addition to giving

(half of the) lectures, the CO is responsible for administering the course, supervising the tutors and moderating the marking of the tutors. Most tutorials are taught by PhD students. Tutorials start in week 2. Lectures are recorded, and these recordings are made available to students on Learn. Tutorials are not recorded.

1.5 Honours courses

Instead of lectures, honours courses offer seminars. An honours course is typically taught by one person who functions as CO of the course. Courses in year 3 have a cap of 45-50. They consist of a two-hour seminar/week and three weekly tutorials of one hour each (capped at 15-17). Each student attends the seminar and one weekly tutorial. Tutorials are taught by the CO and can start in week 1 or week 2. If the tutorials are scheduled after the seminar in the week, COs often like to start tutorials in week 1. If you are unsure when your tutorial starts, see the timetable of your course entry on the DRPS. Either way, each course offers tutorials for ten weeks. Courses in year 4 consist of a weekly two-hour seminar without tutorials. They typically have a cap of 20-24. Students can pick whatever courses they wish. Unlike lectures, seminars are not recorded.

1.6. UG dissertations

In year 4, students write an undergraduate dissertation, which is worth 40 credits. Students writing an independent dissertation (8,000 words) enroll in the Dissertation course (40 credits) and 4 other courses (80 credits). They are assigned a supervisor that works with them independently of any course. Students writing coursework dissertations enroll in 6 regular courses (120 credits). In two of these courses, they write a coursework dissertation (5,000 words each) instead of doing the regular assessment of the course that is listed in the course entry of the Course Catalogue on DRPS. Their dissertation supervisor is the CO of the course in which they write the dissertation. One of our colleagues, currently Fedor Benevich, is in charge of managing UG dissertations and can help with any questions about them you may have. He will also send out more detailed information about UG dissertations.

1.7. Year abroad

Precisely in year 3, students have the option of going abroad for a year. This is mostly managed by the University (Edinburgh Global Study and Work Away Service). If you have questions about this, please contact our exchange coordinator, currently Pauline Phemister.

1.8. Flexible Learning Week

In semester 2, but not in semester 1, there is a flexible learning week between week 5 and week 6. This week allows students to complete their mid-term assignments. No classes are held during Flexible Learning Week.

2. Course enrolment

2.1. Process

In May each year, honours students receive a course-select form from the Teaching Office (TO) to choose their courses for the next academic year. They rank all the courses available for their year according to preference (with the constraints mentioned for year-3 students). Over the summer, the TO assigns students to courses. Since most courses fill up and since demand is unequally distributed, students do usually not get all their first choices. The TO

aims at a distribution that gives students the best possible combination of courses, given their preferences in relation to the preferences of everyone else. The process is not based on a first-come first-served basis. All students submitting their course choices on time are treated equally. Enrolment is managed by the TO. Please do not add students to your courses.

2.2. Switching courses

Students can switch courses, if there are free spots, until the end of week 2 each semester. If a student's application for a course change is rejected because the course is full, the student is put on a waiting list. This is all handled by the TO.

2.3. Class lists

You can find the list of the students of your courses on Euclid (the student record platform) (Euclid>DPTS and Courses>View Class List) and on Learn. You can see student photos on the class list on Euclid when on campus or when using the university VPN. Typically, the class lists are available towards the end of August.

3. Course administration

3.1 Course Guides

The course guide/course handbook must be made available to the students four weeks before the course starts. The TO will notify you of the deadline and send you the relevant information. The Course Guide will then be available on your Learn site and on the PPLS Undergraduate Student Hub (Philosophy>Handbooks & Course Guides).

3.2. Learn

Your Learn site is the course management site of your course (Learn Ultra). Materials that you share with students in class (power-point slides, handouts etc.) must be made available to students 24 hours before the class starts. It is advisable to add all content to the corresponding weekly box, already pre-configured on Learn. Learn also allows you to send announcements to students. Moreover, students submit their assessments on Learn where you can find them for marking. Marking happens on an app called TurnItIn, which will automatically open when you access the assessments in Learn. The University offers courses if you would like to learn more about Learn Ultra.

3.3. Attendance Recording

We must record attendance in all our courses. In pre-honours courses, this is handled by the tutors. In honours courses, it is the responsibility of the CO. In year 3 courses, take attendance in the tutorials. In order to enter the attendance information into the system, go to MyEd>Teaching & Research>Administration>Student Attendance Recording. Please do this within a couple of days after each class session. Attendance Recording is usually ready only in week 3 because students can still switch courses in weeks 1 and 2.

3.4. Resource List

You can use the Resource List for your course. The Resource List allows you to make published reading materials (books, journal articles etc.) available to your students via links to library holdings. It is run by the University Library. I create weekly folders on the Resource

List of my courses and add all the core readings and a selection of further readings to each weekly folder. The Resource List is linked on Learn (Learn>Library Resources>Resource List). You can also find it here:
<https://eu01.alma.exlibrisgroup.com/leganto/readinglist/searchlists>

3.5. Timetable

The easiest way to find your timetable (and room information): go to your course in the Course Catalogue (DRPS) and click on Timetable. Alternatively, go to MyEd>Teaching & Research> Administration>Course Timetable Browser and look for your courses. A third way: go to Euclid>DPTS and Courses>View Course and find your courses; then go to Delivery Information>View timetable.

Classes start ten minutes past the hour except for classes starting at 9AM and 10AM, which start on the hour.

4. Marking and Assessment

4.1. Assessment and the Course Catalogue

The assessment structure is listed in the entry of your course in the Course Catalogue (DRPS). The information in the Course Guide must be consistent with the information in the Course Catalogue. Changes in assessments must be made in the Course Catalogue, not just in the Course Guide. If you would like to change the assessment (or create a new course), please contact the UG Teaching Director, currently Damian Caluori. This must be done fairly early (roughly by March for the following academic year). Assessment changes and new courses must be approved by the School Undergraduate Studies Committee (SUGSC).

4.2. Typical assessment structures

You are free to design your assessment structure. The following are typical patterns in our department: In both pre-honours and honours courses, the mid-term assessment is typically a 1,500 word essay that counts for 30% or 40% of the overall mark. The final assessment in pre-honours courses often consists of a final exam or a take-home test counting for 70% or 60%. The final assessment in honours courses is often a final essay of 2,500 words instead of a final exam/take-home test. If you wish to add a participation mark, it usually counts for 5%. If you would like to add a participation mark that counts for more than 5%, at least what is beyond 5% must be substantively marked. If you add such a component, please make sure that the average mark is not unduly increased and bear in mind that grade inflation is a concern.

4.3. Deadlines and extensions

The TO will send out a list of proposed assessment deadlines in time to incorporate them into your Course Guide. If you wish to use other deadlines, please let the TO know early.

Students can apply for extensions at the University Student Administration (<https://www.ed.ac.uk/student-administration/extensions-special-circumstances/students/extensions-explained>).

It is school policy to no longer offer academic support to students after the official deadline. This is part of our strategy to discourage the use of extensions.

4.4. Word Limit and Lateness Penalties

For Word Limit and Lateness Penalties, see the corresponding document on the Undergraduate Student Hub (Philosophy>Philosophy Assessment Guides>Word Limit and Lateness Penalties). Since the word count varies depending on the word processor used and since the word count in TurnItIn is not reliable, students must add the word count to their essay. Please use their word count (and your judgement) when applying Word Limit Penalties. (There is no penalty for not adding the word count though!) Lateness Penalties are applied by the TO. In order to avoid discussions, it may be advisable to copy the info from the 'Word Limit and Lateness Penalties'-document into your Course Guide or, if you use a separate document, into your document with instructions for the assessments.

4.5. Marking

The department policies for marking can be found here: UG Student Hub>Philosophy Assessment Guides>Marking Guidelines. When giving feedback, please make sure students can understand the mark and feedback in the light of our Marking Guidelines.

The general distribution of marks in our department is as follows:

I (First)	25% ± 10%
II.1	50% ± 10%
II.2	20% ± 10%

Traditionally, (almost) all Firsts belong to the Low First Class (70-79). The distribution of marks in individual classes may well deviate from this distribution (excellent class; very small class etc.). The Marking Guidelines give you a sense for what quality of work is expected for which grade band. In recent year, there has been concern about grade inflation.

4.6. Marking and Moderation

The TO will inform you about when the marks/feedback must be released to the students. Assessments with a combined weight of at least 60% must be moderated according to our Moderation Policy. For pre-honours, I would strongly recommend moderating both mid-term and final assessments since these assessments are marked by tutors who typically are PhD students with little experience in marking. The TO will send a list with pairings CO/moderator. If your marking must be moderated, please take this into account when marking so that the moderator has time to moderate before the release date. It is important that students receive their marks and feedback on the official release date. The marks are only official after having been ratified by the Board of Examiners. This happens at a meeting of the Board of Examiners that takes place after the end of the semester.

5. Special Circumstances

Special circumstances are non-academic situations that adversely affect a student's academic performance. Students can apply for special circumstances when their performance in an assessment is affected by special circumstances. For the university process dealing with this, see <https://www.ed.ac.uk/student-administration/extensions->

[special-circumstances](#) If students turn to you with special circumstances, tell them to apply for special circumstances and send them to a Student Adviser.

6. Student Adviser and Cohort Lead

The first point of contact for students with any non-academic questions or problems should be a Student Adviser. The student advisers at PPLS are part of the Student Support Office (<https://www.ed.ac.uk/ppls/current/undergraduate/student-support>). Feel free to forward to the TO student questions about teaching administration that you cannot answer.

Until this year, most of us were Personal Tutors for a group of students. In 2023-4, the personal-tutor model has been replaced by Student Advisers and by a cohort-lead model. A cohort lead's function is to "create a sense of community" for a cohort of students.

<https://www.ed.ac.uk/students/academic-life/how-we-support-you/my-cohort-lead>

7. FAQ (in no particular order)

(Guy Fletcher)

Q. Can I change the assessment format / structure on my course?

We have a limited window in which we can make general changes to the assessment format (e.g. from exams to essays) for the *next* academic year but from April onwards it's hard to make any further change, unfortunately. Worth asking in case it is possible but it likely won't be.

Q. Can I move my class?

It's quite difficult to move most classes, just because of the chain-connectedness of the timetable, the lack of space, and the need to avoid clashes. The teaching office can advise on what *is* possible (and fill out the relevant form to go to the timetabling unit, if a change is possible).

Q. is there any way I can view and see the names of students signed up to my tutorial groups? (ideally with photos of the students?)

In MyEd under "Teaching and Research Administration" there is a thing called student attendance recording. This will let you see courses broken down by tutorial groups. If you're on campus it shows you pictures in that view. Another way to see pictures (again, only if you're on campus) is to go MyEd_Euclid_students_view class list.

Q. Can I change the deadlines for my course?

Yes, as long as you do so well in advance of the semester starting. The teaching office will send / will have sent you a spreadsheet with the default deadlines. Just tell them that you would like to deviate from those.

Q. One of my students has submitted their paper with their name on the file name.

Should I mark it as usual or ask them to resubmit it anonymised (I haven't yet looked at the file, so anonymity need not be compromised, and they're an exchange student, so I'd be inclined to give them the benefit of the doubt if that's allowed)?

In these circumstances there's no penalty to apply, just ask the student not to do it (in your comments on their paper). It's very often visiting students who do this because they're just not used to anonymous marking so I tend to go easy on them.

Q. Do we have a writing centre for students to get help with essays?

Yes, see here: <https://skillscentre.ppls.ed.ac.uk/>

Glossary	Brief guide	Where to find out more about it (etc)	Notes
Adjustment schedule	A list of accommodations that a student is entitled to on the course. Some of these will be only of relevance to e.g. the dept that organises exams but some of them bear on teaching and essay assessment.	Euclid (students__course learning and teaching adjustment summaries)	
Class lists	A list of the students on your course	Euclid (Students__View Class list)	
Course guide / Course handbook / Syllabus	Different names for the same thing		Need to be available 4 weeks before the start of the relevant semester, in order to comply with the university's accessibility policies.
Course	A specific sub-unit of a <i>degree programme</i> . e.g. Philosophy of Language		
Course organiser	At honours = the person doing the teaching etc. At prehonours = the person who organises the course, gives 50% of the lectures, moderates assessment, manages the tutors (those who teach the <i>tutorials</i>).		
Credits for Philosophy Courses	All philosophy courses are 20 credits. (Exception: the zero credit dissertation preparation course in Y3). Students do 120 credits per year, typically divided 60:60.		

Glossary	Brief guide	Where to find out more about it (etc)	Notes
Cross-listed courses	Can mean: (i) Courses that have year 4 & MSc students. (ii) Courses that are run by subject A but available to students in subject B.		
Degree programme	Someone's overall degree e.g. <i>Philosophy & Economics</i> .		
DRPS (Degree Regulations and Programmes of Study)	The master-recording of information about degree programmes and courses.	http://www.drps.ed.ac.uk	
DiscoverED	The library's search engine which gives you access to online materials.		
(Year 4) Dissertations	There're 2 ways of doing a dissertation in philosophy. You can do (exactly) one of: (a) ' independent dissertation ' - 8,000 word essay OR (b) ' coursework dissertation ' - students take 2 courses and write a 5,000 word essay on each.		
DPT	Degree Programme Table. List of rules and requirements to satisfy a particular degree programme.		

Glossary	Brief guide	Where to find out more about it (etc)	Notes
DRPS	Degree Regulations & Programmes of Study. This includes the DPT but also much more general regulations and rules about e.g. degree classification etc.	http://www.drps.ed.ac.uk	
Exam boards	Meetings where all of the course organisers in a given semester, plus the exam board convenor, officially ratify the marks for each course.		
EUCLID	The student record platform.	Via myEd	
Honours	Years 3-4		
'Flexible Learning Week' (etc)	A week that functions as a reading week so no classes. Only happens in Semester 2, strangely.		Changes name from time to time.
Learn / Learn Ultra	Blackboard. Course management platform.		
Midsemester feedback	Feedback collected at the midway point of each course. This forms the basis of the discussion at the <i>SSLC</i> .		
NSS	National Student Survey. A satisfaction survey voluntarily taken by students at the end of their degree.	https://www.thestudentsurvey.com	

Glossary	Brief guide	Where to find out more about it (etc)	Notes
Null sit vs resit	<p>When a student is granted a null sit by the special circumstances system it is as if they never made any attempt at the assessment, so they are undertaking their first official attempt.</p> <p>When a student is granted a resit they are allowed to attempt *again* a piece of assessment.</p>		
Pass vs progress to honours	<p>The official pass mark on any UG course is 40.</p> <p>BUT to progress to <i>honours</i> in Philosophy, students must get an average of 50 across the two compulsory year 2 philosophy courses (Knowledge and Reality; Mind, Matter and Language)</p>		<p>People aren't always careful to note the distinction so if acting as a Course Organiser for a year 2 course it's worth making sure that everyone knows about the honours hurdle.</p>
Prehonours	Years 1-2		
Resource List	A reading list produced by the library by turning your reading list into a set of links to all the readings etc		<p>You don't have to use one of these and many people do not. That's for a few reasons including:</p> <p>(1) They must be sent to the library way ahead of semester.</p> <p>(2) Worries about students' failing to develop any sort of library / research skills.</p>

Glossary	Brief guide	Where to find out more about it (etc)	Notes
School Undergraduate Studies Committee (SUGSC)	School Undergraduate Studies Committee. This approves creation of new courses / changes to assessment (etc) of existing courses.		Approach the Philosophy teaching director about this, in the first instance.
Seminar	Whole-group classes in years 3 & 4		
Special circumstances	When a student has some problem that afflicts their studies they apply for special circumstances. The special circumstances board then decides on what action, if any, to take.		The student fills out the form with the SSOs so direct them there if they ask about this (though students seem to learn this very quickly).
Staff-Student Liaison Committee	Twice semesterly meeting of UG director + various faculty, some admin staff and student reps, to discuss how teaching is going.		COs of pre-honours courses go to the SSLC in the semester that their course runs.
Student Rep / Class rep	Students chosen to act as mouthpieces for the students in their year group, typically through the Staff Student Liaison Committee (SSLC).		
Student Support Office(rs) / (SSOs) / Student Advisors	The team who deal with pastoral care of students. They also help with degree transfers.		
Teaching office (TO)	Those in charge of administration of all philosophy courses. Office physically located near the reception desk of the Dugald Stewart Building.		

Glossary	Brief guide	Where to find out more about it (etc)	Notes
Tutorial	Small groups classes of ~16, which occur in years 1-3. Taught by PhD students in years 1-2, by faculty in years 3 and 4.		