

Birkbeck, University of London

Regulations for the Degree of Master in Philosophical Studies (MPhilStud)

These are the regulations that apply to all students being assessed for the MPhilStud degree at Birkbeck, University of London. Students are admitted to the programme in accordance with the College's Research Student Admissions Policy.

Attendance and Course of Study

1. The length of course for the degree of MPhilStud is two calendar years of full-time study or the equivalent in part-time study. Candidates must pursue the course continuously unless the candidate takes an approved break in study, in which case the provisions of the College's Research Student Break in Study Policy will apply.

Fields of Study

2. Essays and Options: Students must choose three options, of which one shall be from List 1, one from List 2 and the third from either list:

List 1

- 1 The presocratics
- 2 Plato
- 3 Aristotle
- 4 Greek philosophical texts
- 5 The Epicureans
- 6 The Stoics
- 7 Plotinus
- 8 Aquinas
- 9 Mediaeval philosophy
- 10 Renaissance philosophy
- 11 Bacon
- 12 Hobbes
- 13 Descartes
- 14 Leibniz
- 15 Spinoza
- 16 The Rationalists
- 17 Locke
- 18 Berkeley
- 19 Hume
- 20 The empiricists
- 21 Kant
- 22 Hegel
- 23 Frege
- 24 Marx
- 25 Schopenhauer
- 26 J S Mill
- 27 Bradley
- 28 Existentialist philosophy from Kierkegaard
- 29 Nietzsche
- 30 Phenomenology

- 31 Heidegger
- 32 The pragmatists
- 33 Russell
- 34 Wittgenstein
- 35 Another philosopher or school or area of philosophy, with the approval of the Chair of the Sub-Board of Examiners for the MPhilStud

List 2

- a Logic and metaphysics
- b Epistemology and methodology
- c Philosophy of mind
- d Ethics
- e Aesthetics
- f Philosophy of religion
- g Political philosophy
- h Symbolic logic
- i Philosophy of language
- j Philosophy of science
- k Philosophy of mathematics
- l The philosophical foundation of physics
- m Philosophy of education
- n Philosophy of social sciences
- o Philosophy of psychology
- p Philosophy of history
- q Philosophy of linguistics
- r Formal semantics
- s Gender and philosophy
- t Philosophy of action

The choice of options is subject to the approval of the Sub-board of Examiners for the MPhilStud. If candidates submit themselves for assessment in overlapping areas, they should avoid repeating material in any work they present.

- 3. Each of the options (except Greek Philosophical Texts and Symbolic Logic) will be assessed by means of two essays of up to 5000 words each, inclusive of footnotes, but exclusive of bibliography. Each essay will be on a different topic within the scope of the option. Greek Philosophical Texts and Symbolic Logic will each be assessed by means of an written examination. Candidates wishing to take as an option a subject not appearing on either list must seek the approval of the Chair of the Sub-Board of Examiners for the MPhilStud not later than 10 January of the final year.
- 4. Essay topics and their specific titles are subject to approval by specialist examiners drawn from the Sub-Board of Examiners for the MPhilStud. Candidates will normally be expected to submit their proposed topics at the start of their first year and to submit proposed essay titles for each topic as well as a dissertation title by the end of term 1 of the year of the examination. They can apply for permission to change these topics and titles until 1 March in the year of the examination. Essays submitted on topics and with titles other than those so approved will not be accepted.

The Thesis

5. The topic of research for the thesis must be agreed with the candidate's supervisor. Contact with the supervisor will be in accordance with the College's Code of Practice for Postgraduate Training and Research for Research Degrees
6. The thesis must:
 - (i) Consist of the candidate's own account of her/his investigations;
 - (ii) be either a record of original work or an ordered and critical exposition of existing knowledge and must provide evidence that the field has been thoroughly surveyed;
 - (iii) be an integrated whole and present a coherent argument;
 - (iv) give a critical assessment of the relevant literature, present the findings of research and include a discussion on those findings;
 - (v) be written in English, with satisfactory literary presentation; and
 - (vi) not exceed 30,000 words, including notes and appendices, but excluding bibliography.
7. The greater proportion of the work submitted in a thesis must have been done after the initial registration for the degree.
8. A candidate will not be permitted to submit as her/his thesis one which has been submitted for a degree or comparable award of this or any other university or institution, but a candidate will not be precluded from incorporating in a thesis covering a wider field work which she/he has already submitted for a degree or comparable award of this or any other university or institution, provided that she/he indicates on her/his entry form and also on her/his thesis any work which has been so incorporated.
9. The decision to submit a thesis in any particular form rests with the candidate alone.

Entry to Examination and Submission of Thesis and Essays

10. Each candidate must comply with the examination entry process published by the Department of Philosophy in order to be entered for the examination.
11. Two copies of the thesis must be submitted to the Student Centre by the date published by the Department of Philosophy.
12. A candidate must include in each copy of her/his thesis and in each of the essays submitted for the options a signed declaration that the work presented in the essay / thesis is her / his own as follows:

I confirm that the work presented in this [essay / thesis] is my own and the work of other persons is appropriately acknowledged.
13. A thesis must be presented for examination in a final form in typescript or print and be bound in accordance with the instructions issued by the Department of Philosophy.
14. Every student is required to present a short abstract of her/his thesis of not more than 300 words and bound with each copy of the thesis submitted to the Student Centre. One additional loose copy of the abstract must also be provided.
15. A student is required to bring to the thesis oral examination a copy of her / this thesis, paginated in the same way as the copies submitted to the College.

16. The same work may not be submitted for two different elements of the assessment for the MPhilStud degree, ie for any two essays or an essay and the thesis. A student may refer to material included in another element. However, such material, whether included verbatim or paraphrased, must be properly referenced to its first use. If material from one element is included in another, then the amount of new material in the second element must be what would normally be expected for the particular piece of work, ie a student will receive credit for repeated material in only one of the elements of the assessment. If there is any doubt as to which element credit for the material should be given, the decision will be at the examiner's discretion.

Conduct of Examination

17. The assessment for the degree is in two parts, ie the assessment of the options and the assessment of the thesis. Students are required to pass both parts.
18. A Sub-board of Examiners will be appointed which will be responsible for assessing the essays submitted for the options and any written examinations. In addition, two examiners will be appointed by the Sub-board to examine each thesis and conduct the oral examination thereon.

Assessment of the Options

19. Essays and scripts for options will be marked in accordance with the marking scheme published by the Department of Philosophy.
20. If the Sub-board of Examiners considers that a candidate's essays or examination answers have not reached the pass standard in all of the options they may, if they think fit, determine that the candidate be exempted on re-entry from re-entering options that have been passed. A candidate may, subject to the approval of the Sub-board of Examiners, re-enter for the option(s) on one occasion only.
21. The Sub-board of Examiners may determine that a candidate be given an oral examination on her/his essays or on her/his answers to written examinations.

Assessment of the Thesis

22. Except as provided in paragraph 25 below, the examiners appointed to examine the thesis, after reading the thesis, will examine the candidate orally on the subject of the thesis and, if they see fit, on subjects relevant thereto.
23. There are four options open to examiners in determining the result of the examination of the thesis as follows:
 - (a) If the thesis fulfils the criteria (see regulation 8 above) the examiners will report that the candidate has satisfied them in the examination of the thesis for the degree of MPhilStud;
 - (b) If the thesis otherwise fulfils the criteria but requires minor amendments, the examiners will report that they require the candidate to make, within three months, amendments specified by them. [The amended thesis must be submitted to the examiners or one of their number nominated by them for confirmation that the amendments are satisfactory.]

- (c) If the examiners consider that the thesis does not fulfil the criteria, they may on one occasion, if they think fit, determine that the candidate be permitted to re-enter the examination and submit a thesis in revised form by 1 September of the following year. The examiners may, at their discretion, exempt the candidate on re-entry from taking a further oral examination;
- (d) The examiners may determine that the candidate has not satisfied them in the thesis examination and the candidate will not be permitted to re-enter the examination. The examiners will not normally make such a decision without submitting the candidate to an oral examination on the thesis.

General

- 24. A thesis shall be examined by a pair of examiners (usually one examiner from the University of London outside Birkbeck, and one examiner outside the University of London. All communications sent from the College to an individual candidate must be regarded as applying to that candidate only.
- 25. Candidates at any examination by written papers taken under supervision and within a defined time limit may only use such books, notes, instruments or other materials or aids as are specifically permitted by the Sub-board of Examiners for the MPhilStud.
- 26. Except as provided in paragraph 27 above no books, notes, instruments or other materials or aids whatsoever may be introduced into an examination room (other than any area of the examination room designated for the purpose of storing such materials) or be handled or consulted during an examination.
- 27. Any unauthorised materials or aids introduced by a candidate into an examination room must upon request be surrendered to the invigilator. Any aids so surrendered may be handed over by the invigilator to the College which may make copies thereof, and the original aids (together with all such copies) may be retained by the College at its discretion.
- 28. Candidates must not, unless expressly so authorised, pass any information from one to another during an examination, nor may any candidate act in collusion with another candidate or other person or copy from another candidate or engage in any similar activity.
- 29. The work in the essays and in the thesis submitted by the candidate must be her/his own and submission of the essays and a thesis for examination for the MPhilStud degree will be regarded as a declaration of this fact.
- 30. All work submitted as part of the requirements for any examination for the MPhilStud must be expressed in the candidate's own words and incorporate her/his own ideas and judgments. Plagiarism is the presentation of another person's thoughts or words as though they were the candidate's own, and is an examination offence. Direct quotations from the published or unpublished work of another must always be clearly identified as such by being placed inside quotation marks, and a full reference to their source must be provided in the proper form. A series of short quotations from several different sources, if not clearly identified as such, constitutes plagiarism as much as does a single unacknowledged long quotation from a single source. Equally, if another person's ideas or judgments are summarised, the candidate must

refer to that person in her/his text, and include the work to which reference is made in the bibliography.

31. Failure to observe any of the provisions of paragraphs 28-32 above will constitute an assessment offence; the College will apply its Assessment Offence Policy in the case of any allegation that such an offence has been committed.

Representations Against Results

32. A candidate for the MPhilStud may invoke the Procedure for Appeals Against Decisions of Examiners for Research Degrees should they wish to make representations against their published results.

Trevor Pearce
October 2012