

## Programme Specification 2023–24

### Master of Philosophy in History and Philosophy of Science and Medicine

<b>Awarding body</b>	University of Cambridge
<b>Teaching institution</b>	Department of History and Philosophy of Science
<b>Accreditation details</b>	None
<b>Name of final award</b>	Master of Philosophy
<b>Programme title</b>	History and Philosophy of Science and Medicine
<b>HECoS code(s)</b>	100307 (History of science) 100338 (Philosophy of science)
<b>Relevant QAA benchmark statement(s)</b>	History/Philosophy/History of Science, Technology and Medicine
<b>Qualifications framework level</b>	7 (Masters)
<b>Date specification was produced</b>	October 2023

### Educational aims

The MPhil is offered by the Department of History and Philosophy of Science as a full-time period of research and introduces students to research skills and specialist knowledge. Its main aims are:

- to give students with relevant training at first-degree level the opportunity to carry out focused research in History and Philosophy of Science and Medicine under close supervision;
- to give students the opportunity to acquire or develop skills and expertise relevant to their research interests;
- to enable students to acquire a critical and well-informed understanding of the roles of the sciences in society; and
- to help students intending to go on to doctoral work to acquire the requisite research skills and to prepare a well-planned and focused PhD proposal.

By:

- i) giving students the experience and guidance necessary for them to be able to formulate a realistic research proposal, and to prepare written work based on such a

- proposal to a strict timetable;
- ii) introducing students to relevant research resources;
  - iii) giving students the experience of presenting their own work and discussing the issues that arise from it with an audience of their peers and senior members of the department;
  - iv) providing lectures, supervisions and research seminars in a range of technical/specialist subjects central to research in the different areas of History and Philosophy of Science and Medicine and giving students the opportunity to base some of their essays or dissertation on such teaching.

Research topics must be chosen from the following subject areas:

1. Ancient, medieval, and early modern sciences
2. Ancient, medieval, and early modern medicine
3. Sciences in the age of empire, c. 1750–1900
4. Modern medicine and biomedical sciences
5. Modern sciences
6. Metaphysics, epistemology, and the sciences
7. Ethics and politics of medicine and the sciences
8. Philosophy of the physical sciences
9. Philosophy of biology and the life sciences
10. Philosophy of social and cognitive sciences

## **Learning outcomes**

By the end of the course, students will have:

### Knowledge and understanding

- (1) developed a deeper knowledge of their chosen areas of History and Philosophy of Science and Medicine, and of the critical debates within them;
- (2) acquired a conceptual understanding that enables the evaluation of current research and methodologies;
- (3) formed a critical view of the roles of the sciences in society.

### Skills and other attributes

- (4) acquired or consolidated historiographic, linguistic, technical and ancillary skills appropriate for research in their chosen area;

- (5) demonstrated independent judgement, based on their own research;
- (6) presented their own ideas in a public forum and learned to contribute constructively within an international environment.

### Teaching and learning

(1) (2) and (3) are developed through:

- personal study;
- participation in the weekly MPhil lectures and seminars, the Departmental Seminar, and other seminars, postgraduate training workshops and reading groups;
- attendance at lectures;
- regular one-to-one supervisions;
- general supervision by the MPhil Manager, and in the case of students intending to go on to the PhD, by the Departmental Director of Postgraduate Education.

(4) through:

- basic research methods taught through the postgraduate training programme and supervision.
- students requiring Latin are directed to the relevant classes in the Classics Faculty and take part in the Department's Latin Therapy group;
- students requiring other linguistic skills are directed to the relevant University Language Centre classes;
- students working on scientific instruments receive specialist training from the Whipple Museum Curator and Museum Staff;

(5) is developed through personal study and individual supervision for the essays and dissertation;

(6) is developed through preparation for and feedback from presentation of papers at the MPhil seminar.

### Assessment

(1) to (4) are assessed through the essays and dissertation.

(5) and (6) are assessed on the basis of the student's presentation of their own work and their comments on set readings at the MPhil seminar.

## **Programme structure**

The MPhil is a 9-month full-time programme and involves minimal formal teaching: students are integrated into the research culture of the Department by joining seminars and reading groups.

They should also attend the Department's postgraduate training programme. Informal opportunities to develop research skills also exist through mentoring by fellow students and members of staff.

The MPhil lectures are the core teaching resource for this course. The purpose of the lectures is to introduce research topics, methods and approaches adopted by the Department's teaching officers. Following each session the lecturer will canvass interest and announce the schedule for a small group seminar that explores the topics of the corresponding lecture in more depth. All MPhil students should attend each lecture, but they can choose which subsequent seminars to follow. Each student must follow at least one seminar in Michaelmas and one in Lent.

Students are encouraged to attend the lectures, research seminars, workshops and reading groups that make the Department a hive of intellectual activity. The Department also offers postgraduate training workshops, which focus on key research, presentation, publication and employment skills.

## Assessment methods

The examination is divided into two parts: two essays – the first of not more than 5,000 words, the second of not more than 8,000 words – and a dissertation of up to 12,000 words.

The two essays must cover a range of topics and, taken together, must show evidence of a broad knowledge of history, philosophy and sociology of science, technology and medicine; they are not required to present original research. In order to pass, the dissertation must be clearly written, take account of previously published work on the subject, and represent a contribution to learning. It must show evidence of independent research.

The following mark scheme is employed in the Department:

80 and above	Starred Distinction
70–79	Distinction
65–69	High Performance
60–64	Pass
59 and below	Fail

The minimum pass level for the examination is the equivalent of Class II.I in Part II of a Tripos, extrapolated for one year of postgraduate study.

Candidates are required to pass each part of the examination separately (i.e., the essays, which together account for 50% of the marks and the dissertation, which accounts for 50% of the marks), except in the following special circumstances:

- (a) a candidate whose failure in the essays is marginal should be allowed to submit a dissertation, and a *high* performance in the dissertation may be taken into account by the Degree Committee in determining their recommendation;

- (b) where a candidate's failure in the dissertation is *marginal*, a *high performance* in the essays may be taken into consideration by the Degree Committee in determining their recommendation.
- (c) Many MPhil graduates continue to a PhD. A distinction in the MPhil is normally necessary for continuation as a PhD student in the Department of History and Philosophy of Science.

## **Student support**

The Department conforms to the University's Code of Practice for Research Students.

All students are members of a College as well as the Department and have access to learning support from both College and University. The course is overseen by the MPhil Manager who is the overall supervisor for each student and who gives advice on planning the year's work. Individual supervisors are assigned to the essays and dissertation.

Progress is monitored through the two assessed essays, which are marked shortly after submission and on which the Degree Committee via the MPhil Manager gives feedback. The Department's Director of Postgraduate Education can also offer advice. The College Tutor for Postgraduates will play a role in induction, support and guidance.

A programme of postgraduate training workshops helps students to develop research expertise, employability, and transferrable skills. An MPhil students' guide is available on the Department's website, which includes an unofficial guide produced by students themselves.

The Department's learning resources include the Whipple Library, which constitutes the main working collection for MPhil students; a computer facility for postgraduate students; and the Whipple Museum of the History of Science.

## **Management of teaching quality and standards**

The University ensures high standards of teaching and learning in the following ways:

- The completion of Annual Programme Reviews by each Faculty and Department, to enable central overview of provision and assist in dissemination of good practice.
- Scrutiny of the reports of External Examiners for all teaching programmes.
- Encouraging student engagement at both the local level, through involvement in Faculty and Departmental Committees, and at a central level by participation in nationally-benchmarked surveys.
- Holding reflective, centrally-coordinated, Education Monitoring Reviews for all

teaching institutions to explore provision and suggest constructive courses of action.

- Mentoring, appraisal, and peer review of staff, and encouraging staff participation in personal development programmes.

Research Environment is rated at 100% and feedback states that the Department provides an exemplary research environment, because of the number of active research groups, the level and use of research income and the provisions for postgraduate students.

Around a quarter of the Department's MPhil students go on to study for a PhD and around 80% of the Department's PhD students go on to work in the field of HPS. The pass rate in all courses approaches 100%.

## **Graduate employability**

The Careers Service maintains links with relevant employers and takes into account employer needs and opinions in the services which it provides for students. The Careers Service also allocates a Careers Adviser to each College, faculty and department to act as a point of contact.

Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information in this programme specification. At the time of publication, the programme specification has been approved by the relevant Faculty Board (or equivalent). Programme specifications are reviewed annually, however, during the course of the academic year, any approved changes to the programme will be communicated to enrolled students through email notification or publication in the *Reporter*. The relevant faculty or department will endeavour to update the programme specification accordingly, and prior to the start of the next academic year.

Further information about specifications and an archive of programme specifications for all awards of the University is available online at: <https://www.camdata.admin.cam.ac.uk/>