

Programme Specification 2021-22

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY IN HEALTH, MEDICINE AND SOCIETY

1 Awarding body	University of Cambridge
2 Teaching institution	Department of History and Philosophy of Science, Department of Sociology, Department of Social Anthropology
3 Accreditation details	None
4 Name of final award	Master of Philosophy
5 Programme title	Health Medicine and Society
6 JACS code(s)	L300, V380, L600
7 Relevant QAA benchmark statement(s)	History, Philosophy, History of Science, Sociology, Social Anthropology
8 Qualifications framework level	7 (Masters)
9 Date specification was produced	March 2016

Educational aims

The MPhil is jointly run by the departments of History and Philosophy of Science, Sociology and Social Anthropology. It is a full-time course 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 focussed research in Health, Medicine and Society (HMS) 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 discourses of history, philosophy, sociology and anthropology of health and medicine
- to help students intending to go on to doctoral work to acquire the requisite research skills and to prepare a well planned and focussed PhD proposal.

By:

- 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
- introducing students to relevant research methods across their choice of the four disciplines
- 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
- providing lectures, supervisions and research seminars in a range of technical/specialist subjects central to research in the different areas of history, philosophy, sociology and anthropology of health and medicine, and giving students the opportunity to base some of their essays or dissertation on such teaching.

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, philosophy, sociology and social anthropology of health 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 discourses of health, medicine and society.

Skills and other attributes

By the end of the course students should have:

4. acquired or consolidated methodological, 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 modules and relevant seminars, graduate training workshops and reading groups
- attendance at lectures
- regular one-to-one supervisions
- general supervision of the student's studies by the overall MPhil Manager and Subject Manager, designated supervisors, and in the case of students intending to go on to the PhD, by the Director of Postgraduate Studies in the relevant department.

4 through:

- basic research methods taught through the core modules and through supervision
- students requiring linguistic skills are directed to the relevant University Language Centre
- students will receive specialist training in the methods of their home departments through graduate training programmes and the Social Sciences Research Methods Programme.

5 is developed through the course modules, personal study and individual supervision for the essays and dissertation.

6 is developed through participation at research seminars and in preparation for and feedback from presentation of their work at the dissertation workshop.

Assessment

1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 are assessed through three essays and a dissertation.

6 is assessed on the basis of the student's presentation of their own work at the dissertation workshop and contributions to the core modules.

Programme structure and teaching methods

The MPhil is a 9-month full-time course structured around core and optional modules. Each module is comprised of 4 weekly seminars. Students are integrated into the research culture of the departments by attending other research seminars and reading groups. They may also attend the departments' graduate training programmes. Informal opportunities to develop research skills also exist by participating in other aspects of the departments' research culture.

The core modules are the main teaching resource for this course. All students attend all core modules which run weekly for four weeks during Michaelmas term and are led by different senior members of teaching staff and focus on selected readings. Eight optional modules run during Michaelmas and Lent term, and students are advised to attend at least two of these. In Easter term students attend a dissertation workshop which provides an opportunity for them to present their own work. Students receive two one-to-one supervisions on the modules on which they choose to write essays and four on their dissertations.

Each student will write three pieces of work chosen from the core and optional modules, as specified in the programme structure below. Any combination is permissible, but no more than two pieces of work may be chosen from any single module.

Core modules:

- History of medicine
- Philosophy and ethics of medicine
- Medical sociology
- Medical anthropology

Optional variable modules:

The modules offered will change from year to year. However, students can expect two optional modules covering each of the four disciplines.

Staff

The course is overseen by the MPhil Manager who takes responsibility for day-to-day oversight of the course and liaison with staff and students. Students also choose a 'home' subject (history of medicine, philosophy and ethics of medicine, medical sociology or medical anthropology), and their Subject Manager guides them in formulating a programme of study. Students work with supervisors in writing their essays and dissertation.

The Subject Managers assist students in the identification of a topic and a supervisor for their dissertation (which counts for 60%) during Michaelmas term. Students will be expected to start work on their dissertation during Michaelmas and continue working on it throughout the course of the year.

Students are encouraged to attend the lectures, research seminars, workshops and reading groups that make the departments a hive of intellectual activity. The departments also offer graduate training workshops, which focus on key research, presentation, publication and employment skills. Additional specialist training is available from the Social Science Research Methods Programme and the Language Centre.

In short:

- students will receive 10 hours of one to one supervision per year
- students will attend 36 hours of seminars per year plus a dissertation workshop
- students will have termly planning and feedback meetings with their MPhil Manager and Subject Manager.
- students are encouraged to attend other lectures, research seminars, workshops and reading groups offered by the departments.

Assessment methods

The examination is divided into three parts: one essay of no more than 3,000 words, two essays of no more than 5,000 words and a dissertation of no more than 12,000 words.

Essay topics will be EITHER:

- chosen from a list of model topics for each module (and optionally refined in consultation with a supervisor).
- devised in consultation with a supervisor.

All essays must be anchored in the module content, and topics will be subject to approval by the HPS Degree Committee.

Any combination of topics is permissible so long as no more than two pieces of work are chosen from any single module. The first essay is a formative essay: it is assessed but does not contribute to the final mark. The second and third essays are formally assessed.

The two formally assessed essays must show evidence of a critical engagement with health, medicine and society; 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 applies:

- 80 and above (Starred Distinction)
- 75-79 (Distinction)
- 70-74 (First Class - boundary for PhD)
- 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 in each part of the examination separately (i.e. the essays, which together account for 40% of the marks, and the dissertation, which accounts for 60% of the marks), except in the following special circumstances:

- 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.
- 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.

Many MPhil graduates carry on to read for a PhD. A first class mark in the MPhil is normally necessary for continuation as a PhD student.

Student support

All students are members of a College as well as their home department and have access to learning support from both their College and the University.

The MPhil is overseen by The MPhil Manager who offers overall support to each student and who gives advice on planning the year's work. Each student has a Subject Manager in their home subject and individual supervisors for the essays and dissertation.

Progress is monitored through the essays, which are assessed in the term in which they have been submitted and on which the Examiners, via the MPhil Manager and Subject Managers, will give feedback. The departments' Directors of Postgraduate Studies can also offer advice. The College Tutor will play a role in induction, support and guidance.

Graduate training workshops help students to develop research expertise, employability and transferrable skills.

An MPhil guide is available on the course website.

The departments' learning resources include libraries, museums, and computing facilities.

Management of teaching quality and standards

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

- The completion of Annual Quality Updates 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 the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES)
- Holding reflective, centrally coordinated Learning and Teaching Reviews for all teaching institutions every six years to explore provision and suggest constructive courses of action
- Mentoring, appraisal, and peer review of staff, and encouraging staff participation in personal development programmes

The departments provide an exemplary research environment, in particular in the number of active research groups, the level and use of research income and the provisions for postgraduate students.

The pass rate in all courses approaches 100%. Around a third of the departments' MPhil students go on to study for a PhD.

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.

The skills acquired in this course will be valuable for a range of academic and non-academic careers. Many students will go on to study for a PhD, and will secure jobs in academic teaching and research; others will become successful researchers, science educators, journalists, museum and exhibition curators, media professionals, as well as experts in science and technology administration, policy making and charity work.

Those already medically qualified may use this for career advancement and as professional expertise in their own field.

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.