

I'm writing to you about your application to study BA Philosophy, Religion and Ethics in the Department of Philosophy at the University of Sheffield. As you know, the University will be adjusting how it delivers its courses in the autumn to accommodate the social distancing measures required to combat the coronavirus pandemic. The current plans involve a blend of face-to-face teaching in small groups in Sheffield, where social distancing can be maintained, supported by digital delivery. In this email, I'll explain what this will mean for your studies on the programme in Philosophy, Religion and Ethics.

## **Course content**

There's no change to the overall learning outcomes of the course. You'll still obtain an advanced understanding of philosophy, a proficiency in philosophical reasoning, and a wide range of transferable skills.

Moreover, we have maintained the structure of Level 1. There are still no required modules. We are still running the strongly recommended Writing Philosophy module. You are still required to take at least 80 credits in Philosophy but are free to take 40 credits in other subjects.

And we have largely maintained the content of Level 1 with only some minor adjustments. This is partly because delivering the new blended model in the autumn will place considerable extra demands on our staff's time, and partly because other departments in the University face these same challenges. The changes: we aren't going to be able to offer the following modules this year:

The Philosophy of Film  
The History of Philosophical Ideas

And University level restrictions mean that there will be fewer modules to choose from in other subjects. You'll also still be able to choose a foreign language module.

You can find full information about the course [here](#), and details of the modules that will now be available, [here](#) and [here](#)

## **Teaching**

As you know, the majority of our teaching comprises lectures and seminars, and we'll still be using these formats in 2020-21. Teaching will be spread across the usual two semesters and will start the week commencing Monday 28 September.

It's not possible to social distance in a crowded lecture theatre, so the plan is to deliver all our lectures online. These lectures will be delivered live, with some opportunity for students to submit comments and questions in real time, and they will be recorded for subsequent download.

For our seminars, things will be largely unchanged. That is, where possible seminars will be face-to-face sessions that will take place in small groups, so that we can use our larger teaching rooms and still maintain social distancing. Our face-to-face teaching has always taken place across the University's campus, and this won't change in 2020-21. In addition, there will be some digital provision for those that are unable to attend the face-to-face teaching.

Our academic staff will still hold their regular office hours where you can talk to them about Philosophy. Office hours will take place by video call.

## **Learning resources**

Most of our learning resources are already available online, and this includes all the core reading for our Level 1 modules. Our physical libraries will be open as soon as it's safe to do so, and our librarians are committed to providing as full a service as possible, taking into account social distancing requirements and all the latest government advice.

## **Assessment**

Coursework assignments are already completed electronically, and submitted and marked online, and we will continue with our usual practice in this respect.

We're still finalising our plans for exams, but we won't be holding formal, invigilated exams in the Semester 1 exam period in January/February. It's likely we'll use an 'open book' format instead, where exam questions are made available online and you have a certain amount of time to answer them. You'd complete your answers electronically at home, and you'd be able to consult your books and notes. Some other universities use open book exams as a matter of course. We'll confirm the arrangements for Semester 1 exams in the individual module handbooks that you'll receive when you join us.

## **Costs**

The tuition fee for the course will stay the same, and we don't expect students will incur additional costs as a result of the changes we're making. You'll be able to participate in all the online activities using a regular laptop or tablet connected to the internet, although you will need a microphone and camera to contribute fully in virtual discussions.

## **Further information**

I hope this email has given you an idea of what to expect when you join us in the autumn. As you'll be aware, this pandemic is a fast-moving and unpredictable phenomenon, and we might need to make further changes as the situation develops and the University responds to updates in public health guidance. Please be assured that we'll be approaching the next year as a single departmental family of staff and students together, and we're committed to ensuring that you're supported, and that you still receive a world-class university education here at Sheffield. We hope we will be able to create time and spaces for socialising and making you feel part of the Philosophical community whatever happens,

If you have any questions or concerns, please get in touch with our Director of Programme, Minna Shkul at [m.shkul@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:m.shkul@sheffield.ac.uk). Please keep looking out for emails from the University and checking our [frequently asked questions](#), which are updated regularly with all the latest developments. We also have some [on demand content from our open day](#), which you might find useful.

I hope you enjoy what's left of the summer, and stay safe.

Best wishes

Chris Bennett  
Head of Department  
Department of Philosophy