

Feedback in the Philosophy MA Programmes

What is feedback for?

Feedback provides you with important information, typically in the form of written or oral comments, about where you are in your learning process and about how to do well in your academic practice, especially in your module assignments.

Acting on feedback is a vital aspect of effective learning, helping you to:

- Better understand what is expected from you.
- Reinforce things that you do well.
- Identify and address things that you might need to correct.
- Improve in future activity.

Feedback Opportunities in the Philosophy Department

In the Philosophy Department, we foster a culture of collaborative learning, in which academic staff and students work together to enable everyone to flourish, both as individuals and as a community. Within this culture, feedback plays a crucial role. The feedback you will receive is a great opportunity for you to benefit from the expertise of the academic staff, enabling you to develop your abilities as a philosopher. You will also develop by receiving feedback from your peers and giving feedback to them.

In the Philosophy Department, you will receive feedback in a variety of ways, both formal and informal. Not only will you have written formal feedback on your module assignments via Tabula, but the Department also offers plenty of opportunities to obtain feedback, both before and after your module assignments, to support you in your learning process. Staff are available in term time for feedback. Outside term time, staff may take longer to respond or be unavailable for periods, so do take advantage of term time to plan meetings.

Feedback before assignments.

- You can contact your module leaders via email for advice and support.
- You can discuss essay plans and other things related to module materials and assignments with module leaders by booking an appointment with them or dropping in during their advice and feedback hours.
 - For the advice and feedback session to be most effective, bring along an essay plan of 1 page maximum, preferably in bullet points.
 - Please note, to ensure fairness for all students and to promote the development of independent research skills, we are not able to provide feedback on full essay drafts or look at a plan more than once. However, we will remain available to respond to queries you might have after your meeting.

Feedback on assignments

Yes, receiving feedback on module assignments can be (very) challenging, especially if one does not receive the grade one had hoped to receive! It might be comforting to know that in the Philosophy Department we have all experienced this frustration. As in your MA degree, in professional philosophy too, our work is constantly under review, and everyone, including your teachers, has received – and still receives – critical comments. In fact, helpful feedback always contains at least some constructive criticism. This does not stop receiving such feedback from being challenging; it is, nevertheless, of vital importance for your learning and for improving your work.

To make the most of the feedback on module assignments, it is important to have clear expectations about it:

- It is never meant, and should not be taken, as expressing a judgment about you. Rather, it aims to assess the academic quality of the specific work you submit. It is important to keep in mind that the quality of a specific submission does not depend solely on one's philosophical skills but may also be affected by a variety of other factors (e.g. the time you are able to put into it, personal circumstances, etc.).
- It is not a comprehensive review of your essay. Rather, it aims to provide you with indications about why the work received the mark it did and, especially, to offer suggestions on how to make your future work even better.
- Philosophy is a developmental process - especially when you first begin there will be many aspects of your work that could be further refined. We aim to give you feedback that you can use to get to the next stage of your philosophical development, so that we can then work together on pushing further.
- Some feedback will use the standard vocabulary that appears in our marking criteria, to help students link their specific results to the general marking scheme, which is in the MA Handbook:
https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/philosophy/intranets/postgraduate/ma_submission/ma_marking_criteria_v2_26-11-18.docx.pdf

Further feedback and advice after assignments

- You can discuss the feedback you have received on module assignments and exams with module leaders by booking an appointment with them or dropping in during their advice and feedback hours.
- For additional advice on writing philosophy essays, you can be in contact with the course convenor for your MA programme: Andrew Huddleston (MA in Philosophy); Eileen John (MA in Philosophy and the Arts); Tobias Keiling (MA in Continental Philosophy).
- You can discuss the feedback you have received on module assignments as well as your overall academic progress and skills with your course convenor or with your personal tutor or with the Director of Graduate Studies, Andrew Huddleston.

Please note, the primary purpose of these opportunities is to help you understand and supplement the feedback you receive on your assignments; these are not for arguing over marks.

How to make best use of feedback

Acting on feedback is vital for your learning process, here is some advice on how to make the best use of it:

- Take advantage of the many feedback opportunities that are made available in the Philosophy Department.
- Be pro-active and seek feedback during the development of your work, e.g. by discussing your essay plans with the module leaders.
- One approach we have found particularly helpful is to read the feedback on Tabula at least twice, first skim reading it and then returning to it later with a cooler head to digest it in a more leisurely way. In addition, consider taking note of the helpful comments you receive over the years, collecting them in a single document that you can use as a guide in your future assignments. In particular, try to identify and address recurrent patterns and common threads in your feedback.
- If you have questions about the feedback you receive, it is often a good idea to discuss it with the module leaders or the course convenors.
- Last but not least, you will have plenty of opportunities to receive and give feedback by regularly attending your classes, as well as the various events in the Philosophy Department. It is important to keep in mind that learning is not a merely individual activity. You will learn more effectively and more joyfully when you learn with others, participating, and actively engaging, in the Philosophy Department community. It is helpful to talk with peers about your ideas and to share strategies for improving your work.

Giving feedback to the Philosophy Department

Not only will you have different opportunities to receive feedback in the Philosophy Department, but you will also have different opportunities to give feedback to the Department and to contribute to shaping our community. These include:

- Feedback on modules.
- Student Staff Liaison Committee.
- Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES)

Your feedback is vital to our ongoing efforts to enhance the student experience within the Department. We kindly ask you to take the time to participate in this collective endeavour.