

Philosophy (MA) (120EC)

Master



Universiteit
Leiden

Discover the world at Leiden University

Specialisations

- Philosophy of Humanities (MA)
- Philosophy of Law, Governance and Politics (MA)
- Philosophy in World Traditions (MA)

The two-year master's programme in Philosophy at Leiden University investigates the fundamental principles underpinning human knowledge while cultivating your capacity for reason and sound argumentation.

Why study Philosophy at Leiden University?

This demanding and high-level programme is ideal for students who wish to enhance their knowledge of a particular discipline with complementary understanding of its philosophical foundations combined with further honing of their analytical thinking skills.

The Philosophy (120 EC) master offers you the choice of three specialisations: Philosophy of Humanities; Philosophy of Law, Governance, and Politics; and Philosophy in World Traditions. Each specialisation delves deep into the philosophical foundations and methodological approaches underpinning that discipline. Content incorporates the very latest academic theory and the field's historical development across a number of branches of philosophy.

[Learn more about the study programme](#)

What are your career prospects?

Successful completion of the master's programme can lead to PhD research and an academic career, or in the public, private or non-profit sectors. 75% of our students choose to enter a PhD programme after their studies, primarily in the Netherlands, the UK, the US, Germany or France. The remaining 25% already have a job when they joined the programme and were seeking to enhance their performance.

[Find out more about your career prospects](#)

Is Philosophy the programme for you?

The intellectual tools yielded by the study of philosophy are typically transferable skills to complement any given profession. The master's in philosophy will train you to become an outstanding critical thinker, capable of breaking down the most complex ideas and evaluating the principles upon which various positions are based. During your master, you will study, analyse and discuss primary philosophical texts while learning how to develop and communicate your own theories and ideas.

Do you want to find out if you are eligible for this Master's programme?

[Check the admission requirements](#)

Learn from thought leaders

At Leiden University, great minds have been gathering for over five hundred years to explore fundamental questions relating to human existence. Today, the Institute for Philosophy at Leiden University is an international centre for research and education, with an expansive network of partner institutes and an active programme of visiting lecturers.

During your master's programme in Philosophy, you learn from researchers of the highest international standing. These lecturers are committed to helping you reach your potential, from using their contacts to help you get the internship you want, to inspiring you to challenge traditional ways of thinking. At Leiden, small classes allow for plenty of direct contact between you and your lecturers. Outside of class, an open-door policy means that support is on hand at any time.

Why Leiden University

Leiden University offers ambitious students a world-class environment in which to reach their potential.

A top-ranking university

Leiden University's Faculty of Humanities is consistently ranked among the top 30 Humanities faculties worldwide in the THE World University Ranking. At Leiden University, the oldest university in the Netherlands, you can access the best teaching staff, the very latest research, and a wealth of resources found nowhere else in the world, including those of the famous Leiden University Library and its collections of original manuscripts and periodicals.

Accomplished teaching faculty; an individual approach

The Leiden Institute for Philosophy is a leading centre of academic research with an exceptionally broad range of research streams. Our students can pursue specialised areas of interest not available elsewhere. All

classes are taught by accomplished scholars from Leiden as well as scholars from our international network of philosophy departments. Small classes give students valuable time interacting with their lecturers, who offer a high level of personal support and guidance.

An excellent start to your career

Your qualification from Leiden University is respected by organisations worldwide. Our graduates enjoy successful careers thanks to their broad and global mind-sets, their specialised and in-depth knowledge, and their strong critical thinking skills. The success of our alumni speaks for itself. Our graduates are equipped to solve the challenges facing society now and in the future.

Diversity and inclusion

We are convinced that our education can only flourish if everyone within the programme feels supported, respected and empowered to do their best work. We find it important to offer a learning environment that allows for different perspectives and points of view that students bring with them, depending on their ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, health, religion, age or socio-economic background. Every new generation sees the world from a new perspective – and our students are the newest generation. [We look forward to hearing more about your perspective.](#) Leiden University has been pursuing diversity policy since 2014, with the aim of creating a diverse and inclusive learning and working environment for all staff and students.

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About the programme

Learn about the newest research from the researchers who are performing it.

The master's programme in Philosophy (120) is a two-year English-taught programme. It offers three specialisations:

- [Philosophy of Humanities](#)
- [Philosophy of Law, Governance and Politics](#)
- [Philosophy in World Traditions](#)

Each specialisation offers a range of electives, with a total study load of 120 EC.

Programme structure

For a detailed programme, please visit the programme information for each of the specialisations.

Frans de Haas

Professor of Ancient and Medieval Philosophy



“Our Philosophy programmes are unique because they give access to a wide range of philosophical styles (analytical, continental, comparative) that are presented on an equal footing. Moreover, the Leiden academic staff consistently combines knowledge of the relevant history of their philosophical discipline with their more systematical interests, which deepens both teaching and research, and opens up questions of more general cultural interest concerning the relationship between philosophies and their contexts.”

Philosophical debates

"In my classes I train critical thinking by highlighting philosophical debates in original philosophical texts, in contemporary secondary literature, including my own contributions to the field, and of course in discussions during seminars in which students have to present their view on a particular topic or text and defend it against criticism from their peers."

Reception of ancient theories

"My research is focused on the reception, in Late Antiquity, of the philosophies of Plato, Aristotle and the Stoics. I regularly teach an MA seminar on the reception of ancient theories of learning and education, following their ideas through the Middle Ages down to 21st century debates on *Bildung* and human flourishing."

Extra-curricular

Get the most out of your studies at Leiden University by taking part in our extracurricular activities.

Community building

Throughout the year, activities are organised by the Philosophy department to encourage community building. You will for example be able to take part in seminars and guest lectures at the [Centre for Political Philosophy](#).

Small-scale teaching

Teaching generally takes the form of small-scale seminars (10-20 students), in which lively and engaging discussions are encouraged. The small size of classes allows for a high level of quality contact and interaction between you and your lecturers and fellow students.

Leiden Leadership Programme

Are you interested in developing your leadership potential? The Leiden Leadership Programme (LLP) is an Honours Programme specifically developed for ambitious master's students at Leiden University and the Delft University of Technology who recognise the importance of leadership abilities. The LLP offers in-depth training sessions, assessments, seminars, and the creation of a Personal Leadership Roadmap – a five-year plan for reaching and developing your leadership potential.

Study at the Academy of Creative and Performing Arts

The Academy of the Creative and Performing Arts (ACPA) is a research institute and part of the Faculty of Humanities. The ACPA offers education such as electives, and talent programmes such as the Practicum Artium (PA), which gives you the opportunity to study photography, graphic design or drawing, and the Practicum Musicae at the Royal Conservatoire The Hague, where you can study classical music, singing, early music or jazz.

[Find out more about ACPA.](#)

Career prospects

Where do our graduates work?

The master's programme in Philosophy (120 EC) offers outstanding preparation for students seeking a profession that requires knowledge of a specific discipline and the added value of advanced skills in logic, reasoning, abstraction and critical thinking.

Successful completion of the master's programme can lead to PhD research and an academic career, or in the public, private or non-profit sectors. 75% of our students choose to enter a PhD programme after their studies, primarily in the Netherlands, the UK, the US, Germany or France. The remaining 25% already have a job when they joined the programme and were seeking to enhance their performance.

Examples of the diverse roles of our graduates include:

- PhD student at a Dutch university
- Curator at a gallery
- Project advisor on digital literacy
- Campaign strategist for a Campaign developer
- Scientific employee for a foundation

Teacher qualification

If you are interested in a career in teaching, you can apply for the Dutch-taught teacher-training MA at the ICLON Graduate School of Education after graduating from the master's programme. To be admitted, you need to have a master's degree in the relevant discipline. Fluency in Dutch is mandatory, and additional entry requirements may apply.

Willem Kieviet

Graduated in Philosophy of Law (MA Philosophy 120)



“As a legal consultant, I provide legal support to employees who come into conflict with their employer. I use my input to try to get both parties back to the negotiating table. If this is no longer possible, negotiations are necessary to find a definitive resolution. Sometimes, if no settlement can be reached, the case goes to an appeals board or a court. Being able to give a voice to the ‘weaker’ employee in the face of a strong employer is inspiring and gives me a sense of satisfaction.”

Learning to (literally) think through abstract texts and concepts

“During this Master’s specialisation, you learn to (literally) think through abstract texts and concepts. What is the rationale, the thinking, behind a text? In my legal ‘craft’, there is often a need to interpret legal texts and collective labour agreements. These texts, which can be abstract, are not set in stone, but rather are constantly changing, so you can’t look only at the literal interpretation of the text; the intention and the spirit are just as important. If you can think in the abstract, you have an advantage over the opposition.”

Getting into even more philosophical depth

“Once I’d completed the Master’s degree in Jurisprudence and Philosophy of Law within the Faculty of Law, I wanted to study philosophy in even more depth. This Master’s specialisation definitely met this expectation. The course offers a great opportunity to add philosophical depth to legal questions, a depth which, unfortunately, you don’t get from the classical study of law.”

Jaap van Diggele

Graduated in Philosophy



“Like many budding philosophers, I started out wanting to unravel the workings of the universe. But as my studies progressed, I realized philosophy actually is much more down to earth and practical!”

United Nations and the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs

“I worked with the United Nations and the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, mainly in the Middle East. Trying to address the root causes of conflict or extremism has many philosophical dimensions, that put the politics into perspective. When is it morally justified to act (or not). How do we work with people and organizations when our world views seem so far apart? What should the relationship between a state and its people be?”

Uncover the logic

“In my day-to-day work my philosophical skills have proved very useful. Philosophy taught me to uncover the logic in arguments that at first make no sense at all. It taught me to separate transient distractions from fundamental problems. And after one has had to read Wittgenstein, reading even the most complicated conflict analysis is a piece of cake!”

In which sector do students find jobs?

The graphs below are based on alumni data from the MA (120EC) in Philosophy 2016-2020.

- 32 % Government and semi-government organisations
- 17 % Consultancy
- 17 % Research
- 17 % Non-profit
- 17 % Culture, sports and leisure

Career preparation

Find out how this programme exactly prepares you for your future career and check our career preparation activities.

The master's programme in Philosophy (120 EC) at Leiden University aims to equip you with a range of intellectual skills and academic attitude that can help you thrive in any position. Your high-level skills in abstraction, reasoning and critical thinking are intellectual skills that can be applied within any role, to any conceptual problem.

A growing number of students choose to do an internship during their study. Internships are a great way to gain firsthand experience in your area of interest before you decide on making it a career.

In recent years students from the MA Philosophy (120EC) have been doing internships at the following organisations:

- Filosofie Magazine
- Koninklijke Bibliotheek (Royal Dutch Library)
- Peace Palace The Hague
- Ministry of Infrastructure and Environment Dutch Consulate Office in Chongqing, China

Our staff can help you identify both the career that is right for you, and the necessary steps to get you there. Our team at [Humanities Career Service](#) provide all Leiden University humanities students with professional advice and guidance on everything from internships and career planning to job applications. Humanities Career Service also organises regular workshops on topics such as effective interview skills and creating a successful CV.

The Humanities Career Service offers you various (online) workshops, webinars and info sessions. [Check our overview of career activities](#).

The [Leiden University Career Zone](#) is an online career portal that helps you to prepare for the job market. Here you can find information, tools and tips to help you gain more personal insight, learn about the job market, develop your application skills, plan your academic and professional career, find job vacancies and discover what the [Career Service](#) can do for you.

Join the [Mentor Network](#) to contact alumni with experience on the labour market and ask them for advice. More than 1200 alumni are happy to help you!

Jelle on finding an internship via Leiden University's Mentor Network

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Admission and Application

We invite motivated students from around the world to apply for the Master of Arts in Philosophy (120). Admission requirements may vary per specialisation, please visit the specialisation of your interest to find out more about the entry requirements.

- [Philosophy of Humanities](#)
- [Philosophy of Law, Governance and Politics](#)
- [Philosophy in World Traditions](#)

Student life

Your time at Leiden is about more than just studying. Some of your best experiences will stem from being a part of our lively and diverse student community, as well as from life in the beautiful city of Leiden.

Welcome and orientation programme

In August and February each year, Leiden University hosts the English-language [Orientation Week Leiden \(OWL\)](#), which welcomes both international and Dutch students. The OWL is an excellent way to get to know Leiden University, the city, and other students.

Life in Leiden

Picturesque and the perfect size, Leiden is the ideal place to spend your university days. The Faculty of Humanities is located within the heart of the city, where dozens of cafes, shops and bars line its historic laneways and leafy canals. Small enough to run into familiar faces, but big enough to keep offering surprises – you will treasure your time at Leiden. And for adventures further afield, the major cities of The Hague and Amsterdam are a short train ride away, along with Schiphol Airport, which is just half an hour away by train.

Our study and student associations organise a huge variety of social, cultural, and study events to keep you busy all year round. You can also join the University Sports Centre, which offers scheduled group sports and fitness classes, amongst other activities.

The study association related to Philosophy (60EC) is [Symposion](#). You may contact the study association via bestuur.symposion@gmail.com.

International Student Associations

Leiden has several student organisations that specifically cater for international students. These associations organise regular social events and activities that help create the strong sense of community that exists within our international student body. The main two organisations are:

Erasmus Student Network Leiden (ESN)

[ESN Leiden](#) is an international student organisation which hosts a range of activities and programmes. They also have a buddy programme which provides new students with the right support to assimilate into Leiden and the university.

AEGEE Leiden

[AEGEE](#) is a leading European student association with sister organisations in over 40 countries across Europe. AEGEE organises many activities in Leiden, from dinners and pool nights to boat trips and guest lectures.

For an overview of all of our student associations, please visit our [Student associations page](#).

Humanities Master's Buddy Programme

The Humanities Master's Buddy Programme has been set up by the Faculty of Humanities to help all students who are new to the university to integrate quickly and easily into university life. You will be matched to a buddy who can help you out with your academic and practical questions. Additionally you will be able to attend fun monthly activities and make friends from all over the world.

For more information about the Buddy Programme, please visit the [Humanities Buddy Programme page](#).

Information activities

Get to know us through our online and in-person events for prospective students!



Two speakers at the open day

Are you thinking about joining this Master's programme, and want to determine if it will be the right fit for you? Below, you can browse the events that we have coming up, and sign up to experience Leiden University and the programme for yourself. Alternatively, take a look at the Master Talks videos to find out more about the programme or check out our virtual campus tours!

Upcoming events

Master's Open Days

The next [Master's Open Day](#) will take place on 16 February 2024. You can also still watch the recordings of all the presentations from the last Online Open Days. The videos can be found on the [Master Talks page](#).

Master Talks: Programme videos

On the [Master Talks: programme videos platform](#) you can find videos for each master's programme. This includes a video which gives a short introduction to the programme. You can also find the recording of the Master's Online Open Days of 5-6 October and watch the programme presentation on the platform.

Get to know the campus

Check out our virtual campus tours, filmed in 360 degrees – by dragging the video, you can look around at the surroundings yourself. Below is the video recorded at the Humanities faculty, where most of your lectures will take place; you can also view other 360 campus tours of the various university faculties [here](#).

360 Campus tour: the Humanities faculty

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Contact

If you have a question, there are various ways to get in touch with us.

This website and our [Frequently Asked Questions](#) are the quickest ways to find an answer to many of your questions.

Questions about the Programme

Coordinators of studies

Ms. Patsy Casse

Phone: +31 (0)71 527 24 05

Email: stucowijsb@hum.leidenuniv.nl

Questions about the application procedure, tuition fees and scholarships

Student Affairs Front Office

Phone: +31 (0)71 527 80 11

Email: [Contact form](#)

Or visit their [website](#)

Visiting address

Leiden: Plexus Student Centre

Kaiserstraat 25, ground floor

2311 GN Leiden

Monday to Friday between 11.00 and 16.00, Tuesday between 11.00 and 17.30.