Institute of Philosophy
Study Programmes
Discover KU Leuven

Situated in the heart of Western Europe, KU Leuven has been a centre of learning for nearly six centuries. Today, it is Belgium’s largest university. Founded in 1425, it is one of Europe’s oldest and most renowned universities.

As a leading research university and co-founder of the League of European Research Universities (LERU), KU Leuven offers a wide variety of programmes taught in English, all supported by high-quality, innovative, interdisciplinary research. The international course offering consists of 48 Master’s degree programmes, 27 advanced Master’s degree programmes and 2 Bachelor’s degree programmes taught entirely in English. In total, more than 2,000 courses are taught in English. KU Leuven also participates in 8 Erasmus Mundus programmes.

The university caters to more than 40,000 students, of which 16% are international students from more than 140 countries. KU Leuven’s doctoral schools organise internationally oriented PhD programmes for over 4,000 doctoral students.

The university is located in Flanders, the Dutch-speaking part of Belgium. Leuven is a relatively small city of approximately 100,000 inhabitants, of which around 30,000 live in the city centre. Add to this a large university and the result is a truly unique environment far more international and youthful than a ‘normal’ city of similar size. Leuven is a modern, bustling and safe student city with a long and rich history where cultural and recreational opportunities abound. KU Leuven’s central location offers a truly international experience. Major European capitals such as Brussels, Paris, London, Cologne, and Amsterdam are only a (very) short train journey away. Studying in Leuven provides students with ready access to the cultural riches of continental Europe.
The Institute of Philosophy

Philosophy has been studied at KU Leuven since the university's founding. In 1889, the Institute of Philosophy achieved independent status due to the efforts of Cardinal Désiré Mercier. The university has its roots in the Middle Ages, and so the Institute first sought inspiration in the scholastic tradition exemplified by Thomas Aquinas. Since then, the Institute has embraced different philosophical approaches and traditions ranging from Anglo-American thought to non-Western philosophy.

At the time of its founding, the Institute was named The Higher Institute of Philosophy (HIW), since it originally offered post-graduate programmes. Its course offerings eventually expanded to include undergraduate studies. Dating back to 1969, the English-language International Programme has a long tradition at the Institute. With the reorganisation of KU Leuven in 1993, the Higher Institute of Philosophy was given the official status of a faculty. However, it retained its historic name.

The Institute aims at being a **centre for advanced philosophical education and research**. Students learn a critical and methodological approach to philosophy, one that allows them to participate actively in ongoing research. Five specialised centres have been established within the Institute to support the diverse fields of research being pursued there: Centre for Ethics, Social and Political Philosophy; Centre for Logic and Analytical Philosophy; Centre for Metaphysics and Philosophy of Culture; De Wulf-Mansion Centre for Ancient, Medieval and Renaissance Philosophy; and Husserl-Archives: Centre for Phenomenology and Continental Philosophy.

The Institute of Philosophy offers a comprehensive range of **degrees taught in English**: BA, MA, MPhil and PhD. Viewed collectively, our undergraduate and postgraduate degree programmes aim to familiarise students with the historical traditions of philosophy as well as with contemporary movements in English-speaking and Continental Philosophy so that they are able to engage with the fundamental areas of philosophical research.

With nearly 700 students of some 54 nationalities, the Institute is a vibrant and cosmopolitan intellectual community. Furthermore, with some 30 full-time staff, and nearly 130 adjunct faculty members, post-docs, and doctoral students, the Institute is among the largest research groups in philosophy on the continent.

The **library** of the Institute of Philosophy is one of the finest philosophical libraries in the world, with over 90,000 volumes and subscriptions to more than 300 journals. The library is user-friendly, with open stacks, a liberal lending policy, and an online catalogue.
Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy (BA)

The Institute of Philosophy offers 2 BA programmes: the Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy and the Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy Abridged programme.

The Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy programme is a three-year programme of 180 ECTS credits divided into 3 stages. The student should earn an average of 60 ECTS credits per stage. Applicants for the programme should have obtained a good-quality secondary-level education. Students with some previous higher education studies may apply for admission with advanced placement.

The programme is structured around basic and historical philosophy courses (the so-called “Core Courses”), seminars and electives. The Core Courses provide the student with the necessary knowledge of the history of philosophy and key philosophical themes and concepts. In the seminars, the student learns how to read and analyse texts closely, as well as give well-structured presentations. Electives, which also include non-philosophical courses, stimulate the student's interests and encourage interdisciplinarity. An important part of the programme is the Bachelor’s Paper with Seminar, a course in which the student learns to research and write a more extended piece of philosophical scholarship.

The Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy Abridged programme is a one-year programme of 64-65 ECTS credits structured on the same principles as the regular BA programme but focusing particularly on the Core Courses. Applicants for this programme must have already obtained a BA degree (in a field other than philosophy). Individually tailored programmes of study can be drawn up on the basis of the student’s file.

The aim of the BA programme is to provide a thorough, broad and comprehensive historical and systematic education in philosophy. At the same time, the programme seeks to provide students with research skills for successful written and verbal expression in philosophy. Students also learn to use philosophical skills in analysing contemporary societal debates. The BA thus prepares students for further studies in philosophy and many other fields as well as for a variety of careers.

Applicants for the BA programme should possess intellectual curiosity, a strong interest in questions of meaning, a capacity for abstract and conceptual thinking as well as a critical capacity to examine one’s own presuppositions and views.
The Master of Arts in Philosophy is a one-year programme of 60 ECTS Credits. Applicants for the MA programme should have already obtained with good results a BA degree in philosophy or in a related discipline.

As for the structure, the MA provides a broad range of text and advanced courses which, together with elective seminars and elective courses, guarantee the comprehensiveness of the programme. At the same time, the MA allows students to focus on specific areas of philosophy and its history, and hence to begin to develop their own specialisation. The Master's Thesis provides students with the opportunity to learn independent research skills.

The aim of the MA programme is to develop students’ knowledge of philosophy by exposing them to more detailed study of the central issues of the subject and by equipping them with the requisite research skills needed to proceed to a higher degree. At the end of the programme, students should be able to make a thorough and critical analysis of philosophical texts, situate these texts within the evolution of ideas, and do proper research work at an advanced level, culminating in a Master's thesis.

Applicants for the MA programme should be able to further develop their knowledge of a range of philosophical themes and disciplines and build on previously acquired skills. They should be motivated to specialise in (a particular area of) philosophy and perform solid independent research at an academic level.

Graduates in philosophy have made careers in many different disciplines, including: business, civil service, politics, the publishing industry, media, the socio-cultural sector, journalism and academia. Many employers seek candidates who are not only well grounded in a specific field, but who are also able to handle the diverse challenges arising in a fast-paced workplace. Graduates in philosophy are well positioned to think clearly and respond effectively to such challenges.
Master of Philosophy (MPhil)

The Master of Philosophy (MPhil) is a one-year advanced Master’s programme of 60 ECTS Credits. Applicants for the MPhil programme should have already obtained an MA degree in philosophy with good results or have an equivalent academic background.

In the curriculum of the Institute of Philosophy the MPhil is situated after the BA and the MA. The MPhil programme is primarily research-oriented and functions as a first step towards the doctoral programme. The **MPhil aims** to deepen a student’s advanced knowledge of a topic in philosophy in close connection with the on-going research of one of the Institute’s research centres. The objective is to obtain a profound knowledge of the recent, “state of the art” research in a student’s chosen field.

The **structure** of the MPhil programme focuses firmly on the development of high-level independent research. Each student’s study programme is tailored to this goal. Hence, there is a strong concentration on a number of fundamental research seminars and on the MPhil Thesis, during which specialised skills are developed. The research seminars are grouped into 5 “Majors”, in line with the Institute of Philosophy’s five research centres, which organise these seminars. Upon registration the student chooses the Major which reflects the student’s specialisation. The Major, comprising 2/3 of the student’s programme, includes both coursework and the MPhil Thesis. The MPhil Thesis should demonstrate the student’s ability to conduct original research. The remaining credits are selected by the student from three groups of electives.

**Applicants** for the MPhil should have already acquired a broad and relatively deep knowledge of the history of philosophy and of the most important research domains in philosophy. They should be able to demonstrate a high level of academic achievement in previous studies and they should have proven research abilities.

Students of philosophy develop their skills of analysis and synthesis and are thus uniquely prepared to take on a variety of different careers. Most of our MPhil **graduates** aspire to an academic career and go on to obtain PhDs in philosophy, eventually working as professors or researchers. Others go on to management positions, government, the press and publication world, as well as the media and socio-cultural sectors.
In our students’ words

For students wishing to study philosophy in an international setting, the Institute of Philosophy at KU Leuven is a choice second to none. Aspiring thinkers from around the world are drawn to its English-language programmes, ranging from the BA to the PhD level. The result is a multicultural dynamic that stimulates thought and self-reflection. The quality of the academic life will hone and sharpen any critical and curious mind. Whether you’re interested in a year or more abroad, the Institute proves itself to be a compelling destination academically, culturally and socially.

Jeremy Heuslein

The Institute has an excellent team of professors who are kind, helpful and understanding with regard to foreign students. Professors take into account that students might not be native English speakers, and, more generally, that students might encounter some difficulties related to a new study experience abroad. You can get plenty of information about your programme, courses, and exams, as well as tips on how to write papers, how to start publishing, how to write a doctoral proposal, and so on. Numerous informative sessions are organised to clarify the most important aspects of studying at the Institute. As to the content and the method adopted in the courses, I found it very helpful that philosophical texts are studied very closely.

Marta Resmini

I am grateful to the Institute for providing me an opportunity to pursue my passion for philosophy. My advisor and fellow graduate students have given consistent support throughout my intellectual journey.

Takeshi Morisato

Application information

Are you interested in studying philosophy in the heart of Europe? Applications are invited from motivated students with a good academic record. Cost of studies is moderate. The tuition fee for a full academic year is around 600 EUR.

For more information on the application process and deadlines, please see: www.hiw.kuleuven.be/eng/admission
Learn more

For further information, please contact:

Russell Friedman, Director
International Programme
The Institute of Philosophy - KU Leuven
Kardinaal Mercierplein 2 bus 3200
3000 LEUVEN
tel. + 32 16 32 63 02
international.office@hiw.kuleuven.be
www.hiw.kuleuven.be/eng

General information
International programmes: www.kuleuven.be/internationalprogrammes
International Office: www.kuleuven.be/english

This brochure provides the most complete and accurate information available concerning the international programmes offered at the Institute of Philosophy of KU Leuven. However, amendments to the composition of the programmes may be approved at any time. Consequently, KU Leuven is in no way legally bound by the information provided in this brochure. The most recent information on all our academic programmes can be consulted at www.kuleuven.be/coursecatalogue.

Last updated: February 2013
Copyright: D/2012/1082/198