Subject to change and approval

REGULATIONS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS (MA)

These Regulations apply to candidates admitted to the Master of Arts curriculum in the academic year 2025-26 and thereafter.

(See also General Regulations and Regulations for Taught Postgraduate Curricula)

Any publication based on work approved for a higher degree should contain a reference to the effect that the work was submitted to the University of Hong Kong for the award of the degree.

The degree of Master of Arts (MA) is a postgraduate degree awarded for the satisfactory completion of a prescribed course of study in one of the following fields: AI, Ethics and Society; Art History; Chinese Historical Studies; Chinese Language and Literature; Creative Communications; English Studies; Hong Kong History; Linguistics; Literary and Cultural Studies; Museum Studies; Music Studies; Philosophy, Politics and Economics; and Translation. These fields of study will not necessarily be offered every year.

MA 1 Admission requirements

To be eligible for admission to the courses leading to the degree of Master of Arts, candidates

(a) shall comply with the General Regulations;[1]
(b) shall comply with the Regulations for Taught Postgraduate Curricula;
(c) shall hold
  (i) a Bachelor's degree of this University; or a qualification of equivalent standard from this University or another comparable institution accepted for this purpose;
  (ii) in respect of the courses of study leading to the degree of Master of Arts in the field of AI, Ethics and Society, a Bachelor's degree with a major in philosophy; or a Bachelor's degree with a major in another subject with experience of studying issues relevant to AI, Ethics and Society;
  (iii) in respect of the courses of study leading to the degree of Master of Arts in the field of Art History, either a Bachelor's degree with a major in art history; or a Bachelor's degree in another subject and substantial art-related experience;

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[1] In addition to the admission requirement specified in General Regulation G 2, the Faculty also requires:

(a) TOEFL : a Test of Written English (TWE) score of 4 or above or a Writing score of 25 or above in the internet-based TOEFL (not applicable to the MA in the field of Chinese Historical Studies); or
(b) IELTS : (i) a minimum overall Band of 7 with no subtest lower than 5.5 (not applicable to the MA in the fields of Chinese Historical Studies and Translation);
  (ii) a minimum overall Band of 7 with no subtest lower than 6 (applicable to the MA in the field of Translation).

(iv) in respect of the courses of study leading to the degree of Master of Arts in the field of Chinese Language and Literature, a Bachelor's degree with a major in Chinese or a closely related subject;
(v) in respect of the courses of study leading to the degree of Master of Arts in the field of English Studies, a Bachelor's degree with a major in English or a closely related subject;
(vi) in respect of the courses of study leading to the degree of Master of Arts in the field of Hong Kong History, a Bachelor's degree with a major in history; or a Bachelor's degree with a major in another subject with experience of studying history;
(vii) in respect of the courses of study leading to the degree of Master of Arts in the field of Linguistics, a Bachelor's degree with a major in Linguistics or a closely related subject;
(viii) in respect of the courses of study leading to the degree of Master of Arts in the field of Museum Studies, a Bachelor's degree with a major in museum studies or art history; or a closely related subject;
(ix) in respect of the courses of study leading to the degree of Master of Arts in the field of Music Studies, a Bachelor's degree with a major in music; or a Bachelor's degree with a major in another subject with experience studying music;
(x) in respect of the courses of study leading to the degree of Master of Arts in the field of Philosophy, Politics and Economics, a Bachelor's degree with major in Philosophy, Politics and Economics; or a Bachelor's degree with a major in another subject with experience studying either subject;
(xi) in respect of the courses of study leading to the degree of Master of Arts in the field of Translation, a professional qualification deemed to be equivalent to a Bachelor's degree; and

(d) shall satisfy the examiners in a qualifying examination if required.

MA 2 Qualifying examination

(a) A qualifying examination and/or interview may be set to test the candidates' formal academic ability or their ability to follow the courses of study prescribed. It shall consist of one or more written papers or their equivalent and may include a project report.
(b) Candidates who are required to satisfy the examiners in a qualifying examination and/or interview shall not be permitted to register unless they have satisfied the examiners in the examination and/or interview.

MA 3 Award of degree

To be eligible for the award of the degree of Master of Arts, candidates

(a) shall comply with the General Regulations;
(b) shall comply with the Regulations for Taught Postgraduate Curricula; and
(c) shall complete the curriculum as prescribed in the syllabuses and satisfy the examiners in accordance with the regulations set out below.

MA 4 Period of study

(a) The curriculum shall normally extend
  (i) in the fields of Art History, Creative Communications, Linguistics, Museum Studies, and Music Studies, over one academic year of full-time study, with a maximum period of registration of two academic years;
  (ii) in the fields of Chinese Historical Studies, Chinese Language and Literature and Translation, over one academic year of full-time study or two academic years of part-time study, with a maximum period of registration of two academic years of full-time study or four academic years of part-time study; and
  (iii) in the fields of AI, Ethics and Society, English Studies, Hong Kong History, Literary and Cultural Studies, and Philosophy, Politics and Economics over one academic year of full-time study or two academic years of part-time study, with a maximum period of registration of two academic years of full-time study or three academic years of part-time study.

(b) Candidates shall not be permitted to extend their studies beyond the maximum period of registration specified in MA 4(a), unless otherwise permitted or required by the Board of the Faculty.

MA 5 Completion of curriculum

To complete the curriculum, candidates

(a) shall satisfy the requirements prescribed in TPG 6 of the Regulations for Taught Postgraduate Curricula;
(b) shall follow courses of instruction and complete satisfactorily all prescribed written work;
(c) shall complete and present a satisfactory capstone experience on a subject within their fields of study;
(d) shall satisfy the examiners in all prescribed courses and in any prescribed form of assessment as prescribed in the syllabuses; and
(e) shall satisfy the examiners in an oral examination if required.

MA 6 Advanced standing

Advanced Standing may be granted to candidates in the field of Translation in recognition of studies completed successfully before admission to the curriculum. Candidates who are awarded Advanced Standing will not be granted any further credit transfer for those studies for which Advanced Standing has been granted. The number of credits to be granted for Advanced Standing shall be determined by the Board of the Faculty, in accordance with the following principles:

(a) a candidate may be granted a total of not more than 20% of the total credits normally required under a curriculum for Advanced Standing unless otherwise approved by the Senate;

(b) application for Advanced Standing will only be considered if the previous studies were done within 5 years before admission to the curriculum;
(c) Advanced Standing will not be granted for elective course and capstone experience; and
(d) credits granted for Advanced Standing shall not normally be included in the calculation of the GPA unless permitted by the Board of the Faculty but will be recorded on the transcript of the candidate.

MA 7 Capstone experience

Subject to the provisions of Regulation MA 5(c), the title of the capstone experience (dissertation, portfolio or individual project) shall be submitted for approval by a date as prescribed in the syllabuses for each field of study. Similarly, the capstone experience shall be presented by a date as prescribed in the syllabuses for each field of study. Candidates shall submit a statement that the capstone experience represents their own work (or in the case of conjoint work, a statement countersigned by their co-worker(s), which shows their share of the work) undertaken after registration as candidates for the degree.

MA 8 Assessment

(a) The assessment for each course shall be as specified in the syllabuses. Only passed courses will earn credits. Grades in all fields of study shall be awarded in accordance with TPG 9(a) or TPG 9(b) of the Regulations for Taught Postgraduate Curricula.
(b) Candidates who have failed to satisfy the examiners on the first attempt in not more than two courses, excluding the capstone experience, in an academic year may be permitted to
    (i) present themselves for re-examination in the failed course(s) on a specified date or re-submit their work for the failed course(s) for re-assessment within a specified period determined by the Board of Examiners for Taught Postgraduate Curricula, but no later than the end of the following semester (not including the summer semester); or
    (ii) repeat the failed course(s) by undergoing instruction and satisfying the assessment requirements; or
    (iii) for elective courses, take another course in lieu and satisfy the assessment requirements.
(c) Subject to the provisions of Regulation MA 5(c), candidates who have failed to present a satisfactory capstone experience may be permitted to revise and re-present the capstone experience within a specified period determined by the Board of Examiners for Taught Postgraduate Curricula.
(d) Candidates who have failed to satisfy the examiners in the final review in the field of English Studies may be permitted to present themselves for re-examination on a specified date determined by the Board of Examiners for Taught Postgraduate Curricula, but no later than the end of the following semester (not including the summer semester).

(e) There shall be no appeal against the results of examinations and all other forms of assessment.

MA 9 Discontinuation

Candidates who

(a) are not permitted to present themselves for re-examination/re-submission in any written examination or coursework assessment in which they have failed to satisfy the examiners or to repeat the failed course(s); or
(b) are not permitted to revise and re-present the capstone experience; or
(c) have failed to satisfy the examiners on second attempt in any coursework assessment, examination, or the capstone experience; or
(d) have failed more than two courses, excluding the capstone experience, on the first attempt in an academic year; or
(e) have exceeded the maximum period of registration as specified in MA 4

may be required to discontinue their studies under the provisions of General Regulation G 12.

MA 10 Assessment results

On successful completion of the curriculum, candidates who have shown exceptional merit may be awarded a mark of distinction, and this mark shall be recorded in the candidates' degree diploma.

SYLLABUSES FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS (MA)

AI, ETHICS AND SOCIETY

These syllabuses apply to candidates admitted to the Master of Arts in the field of AI, Ethics and Society in the academic year 2025-26 and thereafter.

The MA in the field of AI, Ethics and Society is taught by the Department of Philosophy and provides advanced training in the skills and methodologies of ethics and applied philosophy. The MA focuses upon the nature and ethics of AI and related technological developments, and their societal roles, impacts and potential trajectories. Three core courses will introduce students to the foundational knowledge and skills in ethics, applied philosophy and relevant disciplines that are pertinent to AI, Ethics and Society. Elective courses provide students with the opportunity to explore a variety of specialised topics. The programme requires students to complete a capstone experience in the form of a portfolio project under the supervision of an expert supervisor.

The MA consists of six semester long courses and a portfolio project, distributed as follows:

3 required core courses (27 credits)
3 elective MA courses (18 credits)
1 MA portfolio project (15 credits)

All instruction is in English and assessment is 100% coursework, which may include discussion, participation, oral presentations, tests, research essays, problem sets, group work, written reports, design projects, community outreach projects, industry outreach or internship projects, and other experiential learning activities.

Not all elective courses listed below will be offered each year.

COURSES

(1) All MA students are required to take the following 3 core courses.

PHIL7001. Fundamentals of AI, Data and Algorithms (9 credits)

In this core course, students will learn the technical fundamentals of artificial intelligence and big data technologies, and how these are applied across a range of domains and sectors, such as medicine, business and government. Students will gain a thorough understanding of the current capabilities and status of these technologies. Focus will be on fundamentals which are relevant to understanding the philosophical import, and ethical, social and political implications of AI and big data. Students will gain a basic understanding of a range of topics, which may include: large language models (e.g., GPT and LaMDA), neural networks, deep learning, supervised vs. unsupervised learning, reinforcement learning, knowledge-based agents, natural language processing, Bayesian learning, data analysis, statistical inference, decision theory, game theory, amongst other topics. The core competencies targeted by this course are a conceptual understanding of the way modern artificial intelligence systems operate, and a basic understanding of the tools used for understanding their import.

Assessment: 100% coursework

PHIL7002. Ethics: AI, Data and Algorithms (9 credits)

This course aims to provide students with an understanding of the broad ethical implications of artificial intelligence, the use of big data, and the role of algorithms in decision making. Students will be exposed to theories and toolsets for thinking about the normative implications of predicting and mitigating the ethical risks posed by the use of AI, data, and algorithms, including issues of fairness, procedural justice, and the like. Special focus will be on the social, moral, and economic effects of the widespread deployment of AI systems (e.g., the large language models that back-end user interfaces such as ChatGPT). At the end of the course, students should be able to explain the ethical complexities associated with different forms of modern artificial intelligence and deep learning techniques, ethical and privacy concerns related to the use of large data sets, the risks of adversarial attacks on otherwise harmless systems, and the potential risks and abuses of using algorithmic decision making in a range of social, political, and interpersonal contexts.

Assessment: 100% coursework

PHIL7003. The Nature of AI (9 credits)

This course aims to provide students with a robust understanding of the history, nature, and likely trajectory of modern artificial intelligence, including how artificial intelligence has played a role in the development of new technologies. Particular topics will include the nature of artificial and human intelligence, comparisons between the capacities of machines and humans, and the potential capacities of future emergent technologies and machine capabilities. Questions include: are artificial systems meaningfully different from non-artificial systems? Can language-based AI systems be said to *understand* language? Is it possible for an artificial intelligence to suffer? How likely is artificial *general* intelligence – is it even possible? Should we worry about the possibility of an AI singularity, or are such risks either too opaque or too distant to be worth thinking about? AI has developed in relationship to a number of academic disciplines and technologies. This course will focus on these and other questions about the nature of AI from an applied *philosophical* rather than, e.g., an engineering or technical, perspective.

Assessment: 100% coursework

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(2) Students choose 3 MA electives from the following list.

PHIL7004. AI Safety and Security (6 credits)

This course aims to provide students with an overview of current issues in AI safety and security. Questions include: How can we ensure that AI is *interpretable*? That is, how can we ensure that the behaviour and choices of sufficiently sophisticated AI systems are rationally transparent – able to be understood as supported by reasons – by human agents? How can we *align* AI with human values, objectives, desires, goals, and aims so that potentially quite powerful AI systems will not behave in objectionable ways? How can we ensure *control* of (potentially power-seeking) AI? How can we ensure that potentially dispersed AI systems are subject to human oversight and control? By the end of this course, students will be able to articulate the major safety and security challenges facing modern AI system design and the various extant approaches designed to solve these challenges. No previous background in machine learning or computer science is expected in this course.

Assessment: 100% coursework

PHIL7005. AI Regulation and Governance (6 credits)

The prevalence of AI and algorithmic decision making raises a host of governance issues and questions, including: How should privacy be protected in the use of large data sets? Are artificial agents subject to the same laws as humans? How can software be effectively regulated? Who is responsible for the potential lawbreaking behaviour of AI systems: (i) their designers, (ii) the individuals who own the hardware on which the AI is running at the time, (iii) someone else? How should AI be expected to behave when it is programmed to perform

an action that is illegal? Should AI have a way to weigh illegal actions against one another? Must the capabilities of AI be published in the public domain? How do several and joint liability work in cases where different AI contribute to a single legally actionable outcome? Are there distinctive regulatory challenges faced by the introduction of AI systems? In this course, students will be exposed to a variety of theoretical frameworks designed to think carefully about these issues, and by the end of the course they will be expected to be able to analyse these and other regulatory and governance questions that arise in a variety of fields, including business, law, finance, criminal justice, etc. While focus will be on the identification and analysis of such issues, students will be exposed to examples of existing regulatory and governance frameworks as models and in order to engage critically with them.

Assessment: 100% coursework

PHIL7006. Minds and Machines (6 credits)

This course compares the nature of the human mind to the minds, or proxies thereof, of complex machines. Students will explore theories of the nature of the mind and mental phenomena, including consciousness and mental representation, the relationship between the mind and the brain, and the relationship between the mind and external tools (e.g., smartphones) we exploit to extend the capacities of our minds. After establishing a firm foundation in these topics, the course will cover the theoretical foundations of research programmes in computational cognitive science and artificial intelligence research, in order to address what these philosophical and scientific theories tell us about the nature and capacities of (potential) minds, or proxies thereof, of complex machines. The course may also explore ethical issues such as the normative aspects of mental representation, manipulation by machines, the extended mind, mind uploading, and the moral status of robots.

Assessment: 100% coursework

PHIL7007. Philosophy and Ethics of Virtual Reality (6 credits)

This course provides an introduction to the current and foreseeable capabilities of virtual reality technology, the philosophy and ethics of virtual reality and more generally to *technophilosophy*, and to the social and political implications of virtual reality technology. Central questions include: What is augmented reality? What is virtual reality and how is it related to augmented reality? How can we know that we're not living in a simulated reality? Are virtual objects real and if so, in what sense? Can we live a good life in a simulated reality? What is the connection between mind and body in virtual reality? What do words mean in virtual reality? Are there special social, political, economic, moral and legal issues associated with (wide uptake of) virtual reality, or within virtual reality itself? What are the implications of VR on social, political, and economic organisation? How could and should such an organisation manifest within virtual reality itself? What principles of design and design challenges arise for those creating virtual reality technologies? By the end of this course, students will be able to articulate the major ethical, philosophical and practical issues and challenges posed by virtual reality technology, and the existing approaches to addressing these.

Assessment: 100% coursework

PHIL7008. Philosophy and Ethics of Information (6 credits)

In this course, students will explore topics and issues in the philosophy and ethics of information. Information and communication technologies have transformed diverse aspects of our lives, including the nature of entertainment, work, privacy, social relationships, communication, elections, and warfare, to name just a few. The course will address the question of how information and communication technology has fundamentally changed the nature of and our concepts of work, privacy, communication, etc. The course will also explore the important and distinctive ethical challenges that arise with the advent of information and communication technologies, such as online pornography, the digital divide, free speech and censorship, mis- and dis-information, and fake news. The social and political epistemology of information will also be covered by exploring how it relates to search engines and the digital public sphere. In addition to explicitly normative issues such as those listed, the course will cover foundational topics and issues in information theory, including: the nature of information, the dynamics of information, information networks, the basic principles of information, applications of information theory, and measures and applications of the quality of information. Students completing this course will be able to articulate and analyse issues both practical and theoretical issues concerning information.

Assessment: 100% coursework

PHIL7009. Technology and Human Values (6 credits)

This course will address questions pertinent to the more general topic of the philosophy of technology, value-sensitive design and critical design theory: What is technology? What is the relationship between technology and humanity? What are the appropriate methods and metrics for evaluating technologies and their role in society? How does disruptive technology affect our values, beliefs, concepts and social norms? How and when should humanity innovate? What is responsible innovation? What values should designers of technology possess in creating technology? Who is responsible for the harms of technology? How is technology regulated, and how should it be regulated? Can technology govern? Case studies will be of a more general nature and may include, but are not limited to: genetic selection, enhancement and eugenics, sex robots,chatbots and virtual assistants, automated weaponry, wearable or implantable technology, facial recognition, driverless vehicles, and digital or smart cities.

Assessment: 100% coursework

PHIL7010. Formal Methods for AI, Ethics and Society (6 credits)

The course will allow students to build on their understanding of the technical fundamentals learnt in the core course *Fundamentals of AI, Data and Algorithms*. In addition to the topics covered in *Fundamentals of AI, Data and Algorithms,* topics may be chosen from among a selection of theoretically fundamental issues in AI, Ethics and Society, with an emphasis on

the cross-disciplinary analysis of these issues. Like *Fundamentals of AI, Data and Algorithms,* the core competency targeted is a conceptual understanding of the way modern artificial intelligence systems operate, and on developing tools for understanding their import.

Assessment: 100% coursework

PHIL7011. AI, Ethics and Society Seminar (6 credits)

The course will consist of both seminars and special learning activities. The latter might include tutorials and workshops, coding or design projects, field trips, company visits, community outreach, or other forms of experiential learning. Multiple forms of assessment will be used.

Assessment: 100% coursework

PHIL7012. AI, Ethics and Society Workshop (6 credits)

In this course students will be required to attend an academic or professional workshop whose topic is relevant to AI, Ethics, and Society. Preparation for the workshop will include (i) reading the relevant research to be discussed at the workshop, (ii) discussion of the material in advance of the workshop to prepare for the discussion (including collaborating with peers to develop questions and issues to address with the other participants of the workshop). At the workshop students will take notes and participate in a discussion of the workshop presentations. After the workshop students will prepare research reports on the issues discussed at the workshop, including outlines of plans for future work on the topics. Students enrolled in this course will be supervised by the seminar teacher throughout their preparation, attendance, and after-workshop activities. Seminar sessions will be conducted by the seminar teacher to facilitate planning, student coordination and sharing, peer-feedback, and joint discussion of relevant research, experiences, and culminating reports.

Assessment: 100% coursework

PHIL7013. AI in Business and Economics (6 credits)

This course focuses on the applications of artificial intelligence (AI) in business and economics. Students will learn how various AI techniques can be applied to solve real-world problems in business and economics, such as market analysis, customer relationship management, human resources management, robo-advisors, algorithmic trading, risk management, and economic predictions. Case studies and the ethical challenges raised by the use of AI in business and economics, such as algorithmic bias, data bias, security risks, privacy violations, and lack of transparency, will be discussed.

Assessment: 100% coursework

PHIL7014. AI and Entrepreneurship (6 credits)

This hands-on, project-based course provides graduate students with the real-world experience of leveraging AI technologies to ideate, build, and execute on an entrepreneurial venture. Through collaborative group projects, students will apply AI techniques to identify and validate innovative business opportunities. The course rapidly progresses from conceptualizing AI-driven ideas to formulating AI-powered business venture. Students will gain insight into launching startups, from assembling teams to acquiring financing. Additionally, students will develop an understanding of the legal frameworks around entrepreneurship and intellectual property to inform how to protect and commercialize AI innovations. Upon completion, students will possess the practical abilities to advance an AI concept from ideation to real-world impact.

Assessment: 100% coursework

PHIL7015. Applied AI, Ethics and Governance in Industry and Society (6 credits)

This experiential, project-based course provides graduate students with the real-world experience of conducting co-designed legal, regulatory and policy research with industry and non-profit organization partners. This course will allow students to apply the learnings from the core courses on understanding the philosophical import, and ethical, social and political implications of AI and big data. Students will be expected to work in teams in conjunction with their project partners throughout the semester on a publishable quality written and/or visual deliverable as well as at an end-of-semester presentation attended by their project partners who will provide feedback. Students will also be introduced to GenAI tools to be used for their projects.

Assessment: 100% coursework

PHIL7016. AI Policy Design Lab: Compliance and Governance Frameworks for Ethical Design (6 credits)

This hands-on, experiential learning course equips students to critically examine emerging frameworks governing AI technologies and to explore how they can actively shape that governance from within institutions.

Through a comparative study of the regulatory approaches adopted by China, the EU, and the U.S., students will analyze how social values, geopolitical dynamics, and innovation strategies shape AI governance in each jurisdiction. Students will then apply these insights to the corporate domain, exploring the dangers of AI misuse - particularly for populations most at vulnerable to AI harms, including children, women, the elderly, and low-income communities. They will learn and practice how businesses can embed ethical AI practices into corporate strategy, product development, stakeholder reporting, compliance regimes, and broader ESG initiatives.

Upon completion, students will emerge with the skills to evaluate AI development and deployment through both regulatory and business ethics perspectives. They will be positioned

to contribute meaningfully to ethical AI development-positioning them to lead in a rapidly evolving world.

Assessment: 100% coursework

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(3) All MA students are required to complete the following MA portfolio project.

PHIL7999. Capstone Experience: MA Portfolio Project in AI, Ethics and Society (15 credits)

Students in this course will produce a portfolio of written work (~12,000-18,000 words). This written work can take one of two basic forms: (i) academic writing targeted at and appropriate for engaged though not necessarily expert academic audiences and (ii) non-academic but nevertheless rigorously researched and carefully argued writing targeted at and appropriate for policy-makers, decision-makers, and other stakeholders. Examples of (i) include academic article-length papers addressed to some particular issue in AI, Ethics, and Society. Examples of (ii) include reports and policy papers (including executive summaries) addressed to a practical question touching AI, Ethics, and Society. These approaches are not mutually exclusive, and students are encouraged to diversify their portfolio throughout its development. Whichever combination of approaches is taken, students' work will be based on assignments and research conducted during their course work, which will then be elaborated through independent research, peer review, and expert supervision. Students will apply the advanced methods, skills, and knowledge they've acquired throughout the programme to improve their portfolio projects and bring them to the standards of either academic or professional writing, sourcing, and presentation. In addition to supervision meetings, students will be required to attend a pro-seminar where they'll present their work-in-progress and receive peer-feedback on their portfolio throughout its development.

Assessment: 100% coursework
