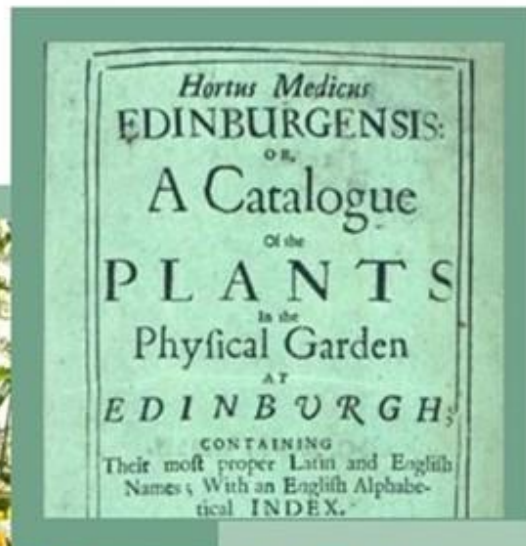




Royal
Botanic Garden
Edinburgh

RBGE Diploma in Herbology Attended Course 2024-26



A Note from the Course Director

'One touch of nature makes the whole world kin' (Shakespeare)

Welcome to the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh's Diploma in Herbology. I am delighted to forward this copy of our handbook to provide you with more details about this innovative and exciting course.

There has never been a more auspicious time to study all things 'green', to learn how to work as one with nature, understand the precious therapeutic potentials of medicinal plants and how to nurture the earth that sustains them.

Herbology (quite literally the study of herbs) draws together several connected branches of botanical study into one holistic discipline.

It is unique to the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh and is imbued with that special spirit that comes from over three hundred years of devoted horticultural tradition, dedicated resources, and the world-renowned endeavours of a remarkable people and place.

As a Herbology student you will be actively involved with, and become part of, this extraordinary botanical legacy and as such, you will be a most eagerly awaited participant in the future of our much-loved programme of study here at the Botanic, as it perpetually unfolds and develops.

This really is a wonderful opportunity to share in something very special. All of our knowledge and expertise is at your fingertips.

We look forward to receiving your application soon!



Catherine Conway-Payne

BA (Hons) M.DES. MNIMH

Course Director

Enquiries via RBGE Education Office

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1. Introduction

The roots of the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh were well and truly embedded in the ancient practices of herbal medicine when it was founded as a Physic Garden in the late 17th Century. Now, over three hundred years later, our unique Diploma in Herbology rekindles that healing tradition. Herbology, quite literally the 'study of herbs', is an innovative programme of study that draws together several connected branches of botanical science to clearly demonstrate the remarkable remedial properties of plants, and the many practical applications that this knowledge can afford. As a student of Herbology you will be directly involved in our ever-evolving organic Physic Garden, and the preparation of some quite remarkable home herbal remedies, while at the same time being immersed in the Garden's own uniquely magical and curative spirit.

The subject of Herbology is by its very nature an expansive one, and our programme aims to encompass many of the most fascinating elements, carefully distilled from key topics considered fundamental for the enjoyment and rewarding nature of its study. Given the garden's medicinal provenance, much may be made of both the traditional and contemporary 'Hortus Medicus Edinburgensis', and the accompanying *Materia medica*, which still very much exists (as something of a herbal remedy-maker's gold mine!) amongst the Garden's botanical collections. This alone will invariably impart its own particular character (and lend weight) to our studies, most notably within the fields of Green Pharmacy, Physic Garden Design and Horticulture.

The main aim of our Diploma in Herbology is to share, enjoy and disseminate knowledge within this subject. We hope to provide a solid foundation from which you will be able to progress along your own particular path of learning and to stimulate, encourage and enthuse you, imparting the confidence required to enable you to explore this most compelling of disciplines further, and to present a context in which you may link related holistic experiences independently. All of which may be continued far beyond your studies with us.

2. Course Leader & Lecturers

RBGE Herbology Director - Catherine Conway-Payne

Born in rural Cumbria, Catherine's very deep love of the natural world greatly inspired her early development as an artist, and indeed herbalist. Catherine came to Edinburgh to study within the School of Design at Edinburgh College of Art, and following completion of her studies there, and a postgraduate lectureship, she went on to study herbal medicine under the auspices of the renown herbalist Hein Zeylstra, founder and former principal of the highly acclaimed College of Phytotherapy. Upon graduation, Catherine joined the National Institute of Medical Herbalists, the world's oldest herbal organisation, and subsequently went on to co-ordinate one of the first accredited postgraduate courses in Complementary Alternative Medicine. Catherine joined the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh in the autumn of 2005, where she established a bespoke selection of introductory short courses in Herbal Medicine, the success of these ensured the future of our present Herbology programme. Catherine now delivers an expansive range of holistic botanical studies in her role as the garden's resident, (or near resident!), Herbologist.

Our Guest Lecturers

Many dedicated lecturers from diversely creative backgrounds of botanical expertise, are invited to join the RBGE Diploma in Herbology to deliver their own highly individual classes as part of the programme's unique content of study.

So, as a Diploma in Herbology student you will be able to engage with not only several practicing herbalists, but also our very own botanist, organic and biodynamic horticulturists and wildlife gardeners, wild forager (extraordinaire!), distiller, botanical percolation expert, a local soap maker, herbal astrologist, physic garden historians and physic garden designer, and our post graduate SSSI conservationist, seaweed-pressing herbarium artist, Goethean science and anthroposophical practitioners, alchemist, nutritionist, herbal confectioner and chocolate maker, amongst others!

3. Course Dates and Times

Classes are taught in the Fletcher Classroom at Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh on Tuesdays from 9.30am – 4pm (may be slightly variable depending on the nature of the classes).

Term 1: 24th September – 10th December 2024 (no class 15th Oct 2024)

Term 2: 14th January – 1st April 2025 (no class 11th February 2025)

Term 3: 22nd April – 1st July 2025

Submission of Dissertation: 31st January 2026

**These dates are subject to slight change*

4. The Course Aims

- To explore and explain the world of herbs
- Encourage the study of medicinal plants.
- Share understanding of the earth's herbal lore
- Enrich awareness of and involvement with the natural world
- Nurture the creative use of healing botanicals.

5. Course Contents

The course is divided into the following 5 modules. Each includes both practical and theoretical elements.

Phytology

Green Pharmacy & Pharmacology

Physic Garden Horticulture & Design

Ethnomedica

Wild Herbal Ecology

5.1 Phytology

Phytology (the study of plants) is presented here as a unique combination of 3 fundamental components of our Herbology studies. These are:

Part I - Botany

Botany for Beginners – a carefully adapted study topic) that has been especially tailored to meet the particular requirements of our Herbology programme. Emphasis has been placed on the forms and functions of plants, their external structural morphology, inner tissue histology, metabolism and nutrition. (Fungi, Bryophytes (mosses, liverworts and hornworts), Arboreals, Lichens, and sea Algae are all included as part of this study).

Folk and Linnaean nomenclature, together with useful techniques to facilitate correct identification of indigenous and non-native herbs whilst out in the field, will also be covered.

(Please note that this topic is not assessed directly but knowledge of the subject will be required for several of your 12 Complementary Study Assignments)

Part II - Materia Medica

Materia medica (the medicinal ingredients or materials used in our herbal remedy-making) embraces an extensive range of healing botanicals and the various therapeutic compounds that might be derived from them. Many medicinal treasures are to be found amongst the Garden's own remarkable collections of both native and non-native plants and many of these may be thoroughly explored within their seasonal time frames.

The basic techniques of elementary Botanical Illustration are taught as complementary to this (and indeed other) subject/s of study – enabling students to capture a herb's intrinsic characteristics quickly and subjectively whilst 'out in the field'.

Part III - Herbaria

A herbarium is essentially a dried garden, a repository or reference library of botanical forms. A collection of herbaria captures a floristic moment in time and may be utilized by many diverse people for the purposes of documentation, learning and enjoyment.

Knowing how to correctly gather, prepare and present a herbaria collection (whether pressed and dried or in Spirit or Carpological form) not only enriches the Herbologist's creative repertoire, it also provides a valuable point of reference to facilitate herbal identification, and perfectly complements our exploratory studies in elementary Botany.

Required for Assessment:

A Herbal Journal (Reflections on Learning)

12 Complementary Study Assignments

A Herbarium Collection (12 dried, pressed and mounted medicinal herb specimens)

5.2 Green Pharmacy & Pharmacology

Green Pharmacy

(Herbal Remedy–Making)

Some of the most exciting moments of the RBGE Herbology programme are undoubtedly when you come to make your first herbal remedies – your very own Green Pharmacy preparations. These remedies may be made using herbs that you have grown yourself from seed, sourced from your local herbal dispensary or gathered in the wild. You will be provided with all the instructions you need to successfully make your own herbal ‘medicine chest’ and an abundance of delicious recipes to choose from

Pharmacology concurrently explores that most magical and holistic of synergies - the precious medicinal constituents (or healing compounds) that are nurtured within the herbs themselves. We will study associated herbal recipe formulations, compile some of our own bespoke adaptations and ponder their potential for eliciting a desired therapeutic effect within or without the various bodily systems.

Pharmacology

We have structured your Pharmacological studies into 3 easy to digest aperitifs as follows:

(Please note that the topic of Pharmacology is not assessed directly but knowledge of the subject will be required for several of your 12 Complementary Study Assignments)

Part I - How Herbs Work

Here we establish herb/body connections, and experience first hand many of the remarkable healing compounds that might be sourced from an exemplary range of medicinal botanicals - collectively referred to as our herbal *Materia medica*. Learn about how the herbs are absorbed, their transport mechanisms, and the therapeutic influences they affect ... all the Pharmacokinetic and Pharmacodynamic effects of your favourite herbal medicines will be revealed.

Part II – Phyto-Pharmaceuticals

A self-directed study of herbal recipes and formulations, will enable you to discover an extensive range of phyto-pharmaceuticals and provide the means by which you are able to compile your own working Pharmacopoeia or 'Dispensatory' (that is a book of directions or recipes), that will describe the properties of profiled herbs, and how they may be prepared safely into home herbal remedies for everyday use. As a Diploma in Herbology student you will be able to engage directly with some of nature's most wonderful wild harvested ingredients and learn about the often ecologically fragile phenomena that link everything together (e.g. the honey, herb. bee connections).

Part III - Nutraceuticals

A mixed bag of herbal nutrition and pharmaceutical study, for our purposes this component of the Pharmacology explores a particular group of nutrient-rich edible botanicals, or phyto-nutrient derived compounds, (such as honey), and considers their therapeutic potential in our Green Pharmacy formulations.

A variety of indigenous herbs from around the world, renown for their particular antioxidant, recuperative or energizing effects will be held to account, not least our very own and delightful Sea Buckthorn Berry.

Required for Assessment:

Herbal Remedy Preparations (10)

A Working Pharmacopoeia

(Several of the 12 Complementary Study Assignments are related closely to these subjects)

5.3 Physic Garden Horticulture

(The very heart of Herbology at RBGE!)

Physic Garden Horticulture enables students to design and create their own physic garden herb bed, learn how to tend and nurture herbs for practical, nutritional and pharmaceutical applications and effectively implement organic/biodynamic propagation techniques. (Phytology - which affords the compilation of a Herbarium, together with the completion of a Herbal Journal and Complementary Study Assignments, is intended to augment this part of your programme of study which includes the following:)

Part I – Physic Garden Origins & History

Traces the development of physic gardens from ancient concepts of the ‘garden of paradise’ to the innovative interpretations of contemporary design, and of course that magical 1670 moment in between when our own story really begins.

Visits to see old herbals from the library archive and or local physic gardens will feature as part of these studies.

Part II – Physic Garden Design & Development

This takes the form of a theoretical design project, towards the creation of possible ‘medicinal’ garden beds, wildlife havens and healing herbal spaces - either here at the Botanic, or other alternative venues. Template designs are taken out into the field to explore the possibilities of selected settings, habitats and landscapes. Herbologists embark on an initially collaborative (group) endeavour to rethink and rework the existing potential of these designated locations, before learning how to draw up their own individual designs, interpretation and working proposals, for a functional and contemporary ‘physic’ garden area.

Part III - Holistic Herbal Husbandry - Practical Physic Gardening

Here you will learn how to sow, nurture and harvest your own herbs. Holistic Herbal Husbandry focuses on the principles and practice of organic and biodynamic methodologies and adopts a 'from seed to syrup' approach towards practical physic gardening and the creation of a medicinal herb bed.

All the fundamental components required of rewarding physic gardening will be covered (arboriculture, pomology and olericulture may also be included here).

Required for Assessment:

Herb Bed Project Plan & Physic Gardener's Diary

Practical Horticultural Work i.e. the creation and nurture of a medicinal herb bed

Physic Garden Design (Theory)

5.4 Ethnomedica

The study of Ethnomedica affords an opportunity to research the indigenous herbal folk traditions of the world ... from the Himalaya to our own native Highlands and Islands.

This is a precious knowledge, and arguably the most valuable part of our botanical heritage. The need for organizations such as botanic gardens to collect, collate and research the remaining herbal traditions before they are lost to us forever, has never been more pressing.

The following subtopics are included:

Part I - People Place Plants

The Ethnobotanical side of Indigenous Herbal Lore will be introduced by our own well-travelled experts in the field, and where possible visiting practitioners or doctors in traditional herbal medicine.

Part II - The Oral Tradition

Remembered remedies are quite literally the unwritten fragments of knowledge passed down through the generations. With the passage of time more and more folk knowledge is lost to us, and therefore the more valuable it becomes and the more urgent our need to 'capture' it. RBGE students will learn how they can become involved in Ethnomedica projects to work with herbalists, ethnobotanists and oral historians to help preserve and develop this remarkable legacy.

Part III - From Folk to Fact

Here we explore the latest evidence-based research that corroborates (or otherwise) the validity of so many of the old folk remedies and practices.

Required for Assessment:

Remembered Remedies Assignment

5.5 Medicinal Herb Ecology

This expansive subject has been especially tailored to meet the particular requirements of the Herbology programme and the sub-topics covered include:

Part I - Wild Harvest Habitats

This topic explores the diversity of medicinal flora within selected indigenous habitats, and the delicate ecological connections that exist within such realms and their myriad organic structures. These sessions will be conducted mostly out in the field and will also demonstrate good practice wild forage/harvest techniques, showing how to gather remedy ingredients sustainably, and work as one in the natural world. Our local arboreal, oceanic and moorland habitats will be studied and analysed within this context.

Part II - Conservation

As one of the world's most renowned Botanic gardens, RBGE is strategically placed to lead global efforts to reverse the impending extinction crisis now faced by so many of the earth's medicinal and nutritional plants.

Our aim for the Diploma in Herbology is to actively involve students with conservation projects (both here at RBGE, and through our partner organizations and field stations) that seek to reverse the loss of key botanicals and their habitats through targeted recovery and restoration programmes. Relevant medicinal herb conservation projects, and issues pertaining to the honour of intellectual property rights, title to traditional lands, and responsible prospecting for natural resources, will be highlighted.

Part III - Phenology Field Study

In conjunction with RBGE's own phenology projects, herbologists are taught how to conduct simple phenological studies of their own, which will enable them to consider changes in the earth's/nature's seasonal time frames, and the significance of these observations for physic garden culture. Some of the holistic strategies and solutions that herbologists might adopt and implement to help sustain, nurture or restore, the most vulnerable inhabitants of a medicinal herb bed (flora and fauna), will be explored.

Required for Assessment:

Field Study Assignment

5.6 Dissertation

Each student is required to research and write a 5000-word dissertation to be submitted by 31st January 2025. This should focus on one of the major branches of study that form the RBGE Diploma in Herbology programme. Individual preferences may be discussed with your tutor.

6. Course Structure

The course runs over 17 months. The first 33 weeks of the programme delivered at RBGE, take place during the first academic year (September – June). Each of the taught RBGE based days will usually include a theory session in the morning followed by an afternoon of practical activities (incl. herbal remedy-making, visits and physic gardening). Once the attended classes are over students have 6 months to complete some of the written part of their studies, during this time you will be supported by individually arranged tutorials that may be requested during September – December of this second academic year, as needed.

Subject sessions are delivered by the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh lecturers, visiting herbalists, holistic and organic practitioners, botanists and ethnobotanists from around the world. Individual tutorial guidance is available throughout the first academic year as needed.

Students will have the opportunity to explore and utilise many invaluable resources within the garden itself, such as the dedicated Herbology Room with all its equipment, the extensive Herbarium, Glasshouse and Library collections, together with our own organic seed banks, allocated herb beds and facilities located up at the Nursery.

Several excursions generally take place throughout the first year of the course. These may include visits to local physic gardens, a family-run honey farm, and wild herbal habitats of natural outstanding and atmospheric beauty, that will each afford truly memorable herbology study experiences, quite literally 'out in the field', and especially embracing our native woodlands and the sandy dunes and shingly shores of East Lothian, which all have their place in our botanical medicine quest.

Please Do Note:

The successful completion of the RBGE Diploma in Herbology requires commitment and a dedicated approach, with a considerable amount of time needing to be allocated to independent self-directed study and research each week - around 7 hours a week of additional study time may be required (beyond the allocated RBGE contact days), but it may on occasion be substantially

more, enabling you to complete assignments to the highest possible standard and augment your individual learning experience of the subjects being studied.

The RBGE Diploma in Herbology is both an academically and physically demanding programme of study, and therefore it may not suit everyone - so please consider your application carefully before proceeding.

7. Programme of Study

Term	Morning Sessions	Afternoon Sessions	Self Directed Study
Autumn	Introduction To Course Phytology (I) (II) (III) Physic Garden Theory Pharmacology (I)	Physic Garden Herbarium Green Pharmacy (I) Visit Bountiful Berries Habitat	Herbal Journal Herbarium CSAs Pharmacopoeia Physic Garden Dairy
Half Term			
Autumn/ Winter	Physic Garden Theory Phytology (III) Pharmacology (II) Herbal Ecology (I)	Physic Garden Herbarium Green Pharmacy (II) Visit Ancient Arboreal Habitat (A Fungi Foray)	Herbal Journal Herbarium CSAs Pharmacopoeia Physic Garden Dairy
Winter	Physic Garden Theory Phytology (III) Pharmacology (III) Ethnomedica (II)	Physic Garden Herbarium Green Pharmacy (III) Visit Organic Herb Nursery?	Herbal Journal Herbarium CSAs Pharmacopoeia Physic Garden Dairy
Half Term			
Winter/ Spring	Physic Garden Theory Phytology (III) Ethnomedica (I) Herbal Ecology (II)	Physic Garden Herbarium Green Pharmacy (IV) Visit Chainbridge Honey Farm	Herbal Journal Herbarium CSAs Pharmacopoeia Physic Garden Dairy
Spring/ Summer	Physic Garden Theory Phytology (III) Ethnomedica (II) Herbal Ecology (III)	Physic Garden Herbarium Green Pharmacy (V)	Herbal Journal Herbarium CSAs Pharmacopoeia

		Visit Monastic Physic Garden	Physic Garden Dairy
Half Term			
Summer	Physic Garden Theory Phytology (III) Ethnomedica (III)	Physic Garden Herbarium Green Pharmacy (VI) Visit The Secret Beach!	Herbal Journal Herbarium CSAs Pharmacopoeia Physic Garden Dairy
July 2025 – January 2026	Self-Directed Study Physic Garden Design. Wild Herbal Ecology. Ethnomedica. Dissertation.		

Note: The above, anticipated visits in particular, may be variable and subject to change

8. Assessments

For the award of Diploma in Herbology, all 5 modules must be successfully completed. This requires written and or practical pieces of work to be undertaken for each of the taught modules. Each student is also required to prepare and write a 5000-word dissertation to be submitted upon completion of the course.

Course Contents	Award	Location
Phytology	27%	RBGE
Physic Garden Horticulture & Design	27%	RBGE/Nursery
Pharmacology & Green Pharmacy	15%	RBGE
Ethnomedica	5.5%	RBGE
Ecology	5.5%	RBGE + Visits

Self-Directed Study	Award	Location
Dissertation/Thesis	20%	RBGE + Home

Self-Directed Study

Further independent study and research is required beyond the allocated RBGE contact hours. This will enable students to complete assignments to the highest possible standard and augment individual experience of the subject.

Completion of Work

All project work (Theory & Practical) must be completed and submitted for assessment within the allocated period of study. Successful students will be awarded the RBGE Diploma of Herbal Studies.

It is extremely important that you keep to the study timetable to get the most out of this course. It means you will receive feedback at the appropriate times to enable you to continue smoothly with

the course and successfully complete it. In the event you do find you are falling behind you must contact your tutor to discuss the options as soon as possible.

Please note: If you are unable to complete a module in the specified timeframe, there may be an additional charge for marking and feedback. This fee will vary depending on the module and the level of marking and feedback required. These fees may be waived in the event of extenuating circumstances.

9. Entry Requirements

No formal qualifications are necessary for admission onto the course. Initial selection will be made on the strength of individual applications and the successful candidates will be called to interview. However, as places are limited, priority will be given to those who are able to clearly demonstrate a natural aptitude and enthusiasm for the subject and or have attended one or more of our introductory programmes of study.

Experience in any of the related fields (botany, horticulture, herbal medicine) is highly desirable, as is a demonstrable eagerness to learn, engage with the natural world, and contribute something to the overall dynamics of the Herbology experience.

On occasions you will need to walk through or beyond the gardens, (e.g. for herb gathering and to reach the Nursery Potting Sheds etc.), and do please also note, that field trips where considerable walking may be required will take place outside the Botanic Gardens, and that these are a key feature of this particular herbology course.

10. Application Procedure

To apply for the course, you must complete our [online application form](#). Applications for this course will open at 9:00am on Monday 22nd April 2024 and will close at 5:00pm on Monday 15th July 2024.

Potential students may be invited to attend an interview with the Course Director before a place can be offered. Interviews may be via telephone/video call.

Successful applicants will be informed 2 weeks after the deadline closes and asked to pay a non-refundable deposit of £500 to confirm their place. The remaining fees must be paid before the start of the course.

11. Course Fees

Tuition fees for the Diploma in Herbology are £4,400. Fees are non-refundable and should be paid in full by the start of the course:

- £500 on acceptance of place
- £3,900 by the start of Term 1

Fees include:

- 33 weeks' tuition
- Full set of course notes
- Travel and accommodation, when appropriate, on study trips
- Tutorials and assessments
- Materials and equipment for all Green Pharmacy practicals

Physic Garden Horticultural Equipment & Attire

Students are expected to provide suitable clothing for their practical Physic Garden Horticulture sessions, and hand tools such as secateurs. These can be ordered at trade prices on the student induction day.

12. The Next Step

Please note that the RBGE Diploma in Herbology does not qualify you to practice as a medical herbalist.

Upon completion of the RBGE Diploma in Herbology eager graduates may wish to pursue their herbal studies further. Our diploma has been designed to facilitate this and affords the perfect steppingstone towards progressing your knowledge in many of the associated botanical fields that the programme so readily encapsulates, such as phyto-therapeutics and green pharmacy, wild herbal ecology, ethnomedica, physic garden horticulture and design etc.

Our Diploma in Herbology graduates have pursued a wide range of exciting and highly individual herb-related enterprises. Amongst these have been the design and founding of medicinal or sensory healing gardens, engaging with urban regeneration and 'holistic green space' projects, progressing their studies to BSc level to become qualified medical herbalists (the RBGE dip. herb provides the perfect foundation of knowledge from which this might easily be achieved), setting up their own organic herb nurseries, lecturing and running herbal workshops (to inspire the next generation of herbologists!), managing and organizing local herb societies and activities, and contributing towards written articles for publication. Many have chosen to create bespoke collections of herbal products for their own, or to supply other herbal retail outlets. Knowledge gained during the diploma also assists involvement in conservation initiatives to help protect endangered and rare medicinal plants in the wild.

A diploma from the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh is recognized around the world, and the RBGE Diploma in Herbology is a unique qualification to hold, one that we hope will lead you on a most rewarding, fulfilling (and quite possibly life-changing!) path of self-discovery.

13. Terms & Conditions

RHS Courses and Online Short Courses

(where all resources are accessible immediately with no time constraint)

You will not be eligible to a refund if any of the learning materials have been accessed within the 14 days of payment (this does not include introductory resources but does include any e-books). If you have registered for two certificates, however you have only accessed one, a 50% refund will be given.

RBGE Diplomas and Certificates

Online Courses: You are eligible for a full refund within 14 days of payment, minus the value of the course available and accessed (e.g. if the course has 10 units and you have accessed one, you will receive 90% of the course fee as a refund).

Attended Courses: We will be unable to offer a refund after the start of the course.

Exercising your right to cancel

If you wish to exercise your right to cancel within the 14 days, you must inform us of your decision within the cooling off period. Cancellation by email or by post is effective from the date on which you send us your message.

Fees will not be refundable should you not complete or pass the course.

14. Privacy Notice

RBGE will process your personal data for the administration of your course, to create your account on PropaGate Learning and to take payment (where relevant). RBGE will also process your personal data to inform you of any updates to the course, the admissions procedure, course dates, as well as any special offers. For more information see our [privacy notice](#).