

Handbook of Rules and Policies
for Graduate Study

Philosophy Department
University of Maryland

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1 Preface

The Department of Philosophy is part of the College of Arts and Humanities at the University of Maryland, and as such is bound by all of the rules and policies of these bodies. It is the student's responsibility to be informed about these rules and policies, which are summarized in the University of Maryland Graduate Catalog, available on the web at

<http://www.gradschool.umd.edu/catalog/requirements.html>,

and also to be informed about the rules and policies of the Department of Philosophy, which are contained in this Handbook.

Throughout this Handbook, expressions such as “the Department,” “students,” “the faculty,” “the University,” and the like are to be understood as referring to the Department of Philosophy, graduate students enrolled in the Department of Philosophy, faculty members of the Department of Philosophy, the University of Maryland, and the like, except as explicitly noted otherwise. Furthermore, “completing” a course should be taken to mean completing that course with a grade of B or better.

The faculty is the official interpreter of the rules and policies set forth in this Handbook, which delegates the power in the first instance to the Graduate Director. The Department retains the right to modify, alter, overrule, or change any of the rules or policies set forth in this Handbook, in accord with its established practices for doing so.

2 The PhD program

2.1 Basic Requirements

2.1.1 Course Requirement

In order to satisfy the Course Requirement, each student must complete twelve three-hour courses, or a total of thirty-six hours of course work.¹ As detailed below, three of these courses must be core courses, and five others must be graduate seminars offered by the Department. The presumption is that the other four courses will be graduate or upper-level

¹Since the requirements of the PhD program subsume those of the MA program, PhD students are welcome to collect an MA once they have completed the requirements detailed in Section 3 below.

undergraduate philosophy courses as well, but substitutions, including courses from other departments, are allowed with permission of the Graduate Director.

2.1.2 Core Course Requirement

The Department offers the following four graduate courses, known as Core Courses, specifically designed for students beginning their graduate careers:

- Metaphysics, Mind, and Language
- Value theory
- Epistemology
- Philosophy of Science

These Core Courses will: (i) be taught at a suitable level for first year graduate students; (ii) be broad, covering at least a handful of central topics (although not necessarily attempting a general survey); (iii) be aimed at preparing students for further graduate work in the area; and (iv) have a final examination and not a long term paper.

In order to satisfy the Core Course Requirement, each student must complete the following Core Courses:

- (1) Metaphysics, Mind, and Language
- (2) Value Theory
- (3) Either (a) Epistemology or (b) Philosophy of Science

2.1.3 Seminar Requirement

In order to satisfy the Seminar Requirement, each student must complete, in addition to the Core Courses, at least five other 800-level graduate seminars offered by the Department. Graduate seminars will typically require a substantial research paper and may require a class presentation.

2.1.4 History Requirement

In order to satisfy the History Requirement, a student must complete at least two courses focusing primarily on a particular period or on particular figures in the history of philosophy. (Courses only part of which are historical can count toward satisfying the history requirement, but only for those students who opt to write a largely historical term paper for assessment purposes.)

2.1.5 Logic Requirement

A student can satisfy the Logic Requirement in one of four ways: (i) by completing Philosophy 271 ; (ii) by completing the final exam for that course, even though the student did not enroll in the course; (iii) by completing a more advanced course in logic offered by the Department; or (iv) by demonstrating completion elsewhere of course work equivalent to or more advanced than Philosophy 271. Note that Philosophy 271 is a lower-level course, and so would not normally count as one of the twelve courses required for the PhD degree.

2.2 Prospectus Requirement and Admission to Candidacy

2.2.1 Prospectus Requirement

In order to satisfy the Prospectus Requirement, a student must form a Prospectus Examining committee, write a Dissertation Prospectus, and have the Prospectus approved by the Prospectus Examining Committee at a formal Prospectus Meeting.

- (1) A Prospectus Examining Committee is an internal Departmental committee appointed by the Graduate Director for the sole purpose of evaluating a particular student's Prospectus. The Committee must have a minimum of three members. The Chair of the Committee and at least two other members must be members of the Department.
- (2) A Dissertation Prospectus is a written document, prepared by the student, that describes the nature of the proposed dissertation project, and also demonstrates the student's competence to write such a dissertation. The Department requires that a Prospectus should contain at least the following four parts: (i) an overview of the proposed dissertation, typically ten to fifteen pages, though some Committees may ask for considerably more; (ii) an extensive bibliography, demonstrating familiarity with

the relevant literature; (iii) a tentative schedule for completion of the dissertation; and (iv) a writing sample demonstrating the student's competence to work in the area (the writing sample need not be part of the projected dissertation, but may be simply a relevant paper in a related field). Depending on the nature of the student's proposed dissertation project, the Examining Committee may impose other requirements on the Prospectus. Since there are a variety of different models for what a Prospectus should look like, students are advised to get clarification of the expectations of their committee members in advance.

- (3) With the consent of the Chair of the Examining Committee, the Prospectus will be distributed to members of the Committee, and a Prospectus Meeting will be scheduled. At this meeting, the members of the Committee discuss the Prospectus with the student, to determine whether it is a viable dissertation project. The Committee may accept the Prospectus as it stands, or accept it conditional upon the satisfaction of certain specified requirements; alternatively, the Committee may reject the Prospectus, and either require revisions for reconsideration at another Prospectus Meeting, or deem the entire project not viable.

2.2.2 Admission to Candidacy

After the student's Dissertation Prospectus has been accepted by the Examining Committee, the student may apply for Admission to Candidacy for the PhD degree, following the procedures detailed in the Graduate Catalog.

2.3 Dissertation Requirement

In order to satisfy the Dissertation Requirement, a student must write a Dissertation, and have that Dissertation approved by the Dissertation Examining Committee at a formal Dissertation Defense.

- (1) A Dissertation Examining Committee is a University committee appointed by the Dean of the Graduate School for the purpose of evaluating the student's dissertation. The constitution and authority of this Committee is described in the Graduate Catalog. In the normal course of events, the Prospectus Examining Committee will form the core

of the student's Dissertation Examining Committee, and the Chair of the Prospectus Examining Committee will become the Chair of the Dissertation Examining Committee, known as the student's Dissertation Director. A student may request that a Dissertation Examining Committee be formed at any point after he or she has satisfied the Prospectus Requirement.

- (2) The University's policies concerning the style and form of Doctoral Dissertations are described in the Thesis and Dissertation Manual, available from the Graduate Records Office.
- (3) Once a student's Dissertation is complete, the student will be examined on the contents of the dissertation in a final Dissertation Defense, which will be conducted in accord with the procedures set out in the Graduate Catalog.

3 The MA program

3.1 Basic Requirements

3.1.1 Course Requirement

In order to satisfy the Course Requirement, a student must complete ten three-hour courses, or a total of thirty hours of course work. As detailed below, three of these courses must be Core Courses, and three others must be graduate seminars offered by the Department. The presumption is that the other four courses will be graduate or upper-level undergraduate philosophy courses as well, but substitutions, including courses from other departments, are allowed with permission of the Graduate Director. As explained below, as many as two of the ten required courses may be special MA Paper courses.

3.1.2 Core Course Requirement

The Core Course Requirement for the MA is identical to that for the PhD, described above in Section 2.1.2.

3.1.3 Seminar Requirement

In order to satisfy the Seminar Requirement, a student must complete, in addition to the Core Courses, at least three other 800-level graduate seminars offered by the Department.

3.1.4 History Requirement

In order to satisfy the History Requirement, a student must complete at least one course focusing primarily on a particular period or on particular figures in the history of philosophy. (A courses only part of which is historical can count toward satisfying the history requirement, but only for those students who opt to write a largely historical term paper for assessment purposes.)

3.1.5 Logic Requirement

A student can satisfy the Logic Requirement in one of four ways: (i) by completing Philosophy 271 (Symbolic Logic); (ii) by completing the final exam for that course, even though the student did not enroll in the course; (iii) by completing a more advanced course in logic offered by the Department; or (iv) by demonstrating completion elsewhere of course work equivalent to or more advanced than Philosophy 271. Note that Philosophy 271 is a lower-level course, and so would not normally count as one of the ten courses required for the MA degree.

3.1.6 The Scholarly Paper Requirement

A student must complete at least one scholarly paper, exhibiting appropriate mechanics and standards of argument. Normally, a substantial seminar or course paper will satisfy this requirement, but the paper must be approved by the Graduate Director.

3.2 The MA Paper

The Department does not require a thesis for the MA degree. However, a student who wants to concentrate on the production of a substantial piece of philosophical research in the course of obtaining the MA degree has the option of taking up to two terms (six credit) of Philosophy 798 (Master's Level Independent Study.) This course is run as a directed study with an individual faculty member, who is then designated as the student's MA Paper

Director. The student's goal in the MA Paper Research Course is the production of an extended paper, equivalent in quality and scope to a standard masters thesis.

4 Financial Support and Good Standing

4.1 Financial Support

Certain PhD students are admitted to the Department with financial support—in the form of a TA, an RA, or a Fellowship—or otherwise acquire a presumption of support at some point in their graduate career. The Department guarantees that, barring financial emergencies, each of these students will receive financial support for a total period of five years (ten terms). Both internal and external sources of funding are counted in determining the years of support.

The five-year rule will be adjusted on a case-by-case basis for supported students who are admitted with transfer credits, or for students who acquire the presumption of support at some time later than their first semester, since, in either case, the duration between the initial award of financial support and completion of the degree can be expected to be somewhat shorter.

Students who do not remain in good standing should not expect to receive any further financial support. There will be cases in which, due to staffing or other needs, students who are not in good standing, or students for whom there is no presumption of support, will in fact be hired as TA's or RA's by the Department. The Department makes no commitment of further support to students in this category.

4.2 Good Standing

The concept of good standing applies only to students with the presumption of support, is based on rate of progress through the PhD program, and has three components: (1) Core Course completion rate, (2) course completion rate, (3) date of Admission to Candidacy.

In order to remain in good standing, each supported student must:

- (1) Complete at least one Core Course by the end of the student's first term, two by the end of the second term, and all three by the end of the fourth term;

- (2) Complete at least four courses per year until Admission to Candidacy, at the rate of at least two per term; and
- (3) Satisfy the Prospectus Requirement and be Admitted to Candidacy by the end of the student's seventh term, which is typically the first term of the fourth year.

The normal expectation is that a student who has been Admitted to Candidacy, and who has made substantial progress toward the completion of a dissertation by the eighth term of graduate study, which is typically the second term of the student's fourth year, will then receive a fifth year of support.

5 Rate of Progress

The rate of progress necessary for students with financial support to remain in good standing is detailed in Section 4.2. Since their circumstances are so varied, students without financial support are subject only to the University rules governing rate of progress; the Department imposes no additional rate of progress requirements on unsupported students.

A Academic Dishonesty

Any graduate students who receives a grade of F (understood to include a grade of XF for academic dishonesty) in connection with any course will be asked to leave the program. That student may appeal the decision to the Graduate Director or Department Chair.