

UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

College of Arts and Sciences

Syllabus for the Graduate Programs in Philosophy

(Effective for students entering Fall 2024 and later)

This document contains the requirements and procedures for the MA and PhD programs of the Department of Philosophy. In addition to these, graduate students are expected to meet all of the general requirements maintained by the Graduate College, available [here](#).

The M.A. degree in Philosophy

The M.A. program has two pathways. Students may choose between the thesis option and the non-thesis option. Descriptions of these pathways are listed below the requirements common to all M.A. students.

Requirements and Policies for all M.A. Students

- All M.A. students
 - will complete 33 hours total of graduate work toward the degree.
 - must take Symbolic Logic I (Phil 4133) (or have the requirement waived by virtue of having taken an equivalent course).
 - must take the Proseminar.
 - will be advised by the department's Graduate Liaison.
- Students who wish to take graduate courses in other departments must seek approval of the Graduate Liaison. Students who wish to transfer in credits from other institutions must seek approval from both the Graduate Liaison and the Graduate College.
- Whether in transfer hours or hours taken in other department, students should not have more than eight hours of coursework from outside the Philosophy Department.
- In typical circumstances, a maximum of 3 hours may be taken in Independent Study (Phil 5990).
- Grade and GPA requirements for course credit and retention in the MA program are in accordance with Graduate College regulations, available in the Graduate Bulletin [here](#).

The M.A. Thesis Option

In addition to fulfilling the general M.A. requirements, students electing the thesis option will produce a polished, scholarly work of philosophy devised independently of,

or going substantially beyond, written work produced during the student’s coursework, followed by an oral examination on the thesis. In order to receive the M.A. degree, both the written work and oral examination must be judged satisfactory by the student’s thesis committee

In order to pursue the thesis option, the student should consult with the Graduate Liaison toward the end of their first year. The Graduate Liaison will assist the student in forming a thesis committee and in discussion of a viable thesis topic.

Quick Checklist of Thesis Option Requirements

Complete 33 hours total of graduate coursework, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Symbolic Logic I• Proseminar
Form thesis committee
Complete written thesis and oral examination

The M.A. Exam Option

In addition to fulfilling the general M.A. requirements, students electing the non-thesis option must successfully pass the M.A. comprehensive exam. To complete this exam, students must submit two of their philosophical papers at a date determined annually by the Graduate Liaison. These should be papers produced in coursework that the student judges to best exemplify their philosophical skills and abilities. The papers should also address distinctive and different areas of philosophy (e.g., a student should not submit two papers in epistemology). A committee of faculty, chosen annually by the Graduate Liaison, will then evaluate the papers as evidence of the student’s work and learning. If the papers are judged satisfactory, the exam will be awarded a “pass.”

Quick Checklist of Non-Thesis Option Requirements

Complete 33 hours total of graduate coursework, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Symbolic Logic I• Proseminar
Pass the comprehensive exam

Students enrolled in the M.A. program who wish to pursue admission to our Ph.D. program should consult with the Graduate Admissions Director and should apply to the Ph.D. program in late fall of their second year. Information on how to apply is available [here](#).

The Ph.D. Degree in Philosophy

Coursework Requirements and Policies

The Ph.D. degree requires 90 hours of graduate work, of which 39 hours may be dissertation research. Grade and GPA requirements for course credit and retention in the PhD program are in accordance with Graduate College regulations, available in the Graduate Bulletin [here](#).

Course Distribution

Coursework applied to the Ph.D. degree must meet the department's distribution requirements. The distribution area a particular course will fulfill is determined by the Graduate Liaison in consultation with the course instructor (and, as necessary, the Graduate Studies Committee). Some courses may address more than one distribution area (e.g., a course on Aristotle's virtue ethics might fulfill either History or Ethics). However, no single course may be used to fulfill two required distribution areas. The student must choose in which distribution area they would wish the course to apply. The required distribution of courses is as follows:

- Proseminar
- Writing Seminar (x2)
- Nine hours in History of Philosophy, distributed as follows:
 - Three hours in Ancient Philosophy (Greek or Chinese)
 - Three hours in Modern European Philosophy
 - Three hours in History of the student's choice
- Nine hours in Value, six of which must be in Ethics
- Nine hours in Metaphysics and Epistemology, distributed as follows:
 - Three hours in Metaphysics
 - Three hours in Epistemology
 - Three hours in the Metaphysics or Epistemology area of the student's choice
- The remainder of the student's course hours are electives.
- Typically, a maximum of six hours of Independent Study (Philosophy 5990) will be allowed in this program.

Credit Hours Outside the OU Philosophy Department

- **Transfer Hours:** The number of hours that may be transferred from other programs will be determined in consultation with the Graduate Liaison and, as

necessary, with the full Graduate Studies Committee. A student arriving with an M.A. in philosophy from another institution will be eligible to transfer up to 33 hours toward the total number of hours required for the Ph.D., where all coursework to be transferred received a grade of “B” or better. However, department policy is to restrict to 18 hours the amount of credit from another institution that can be applied toward non-dissertation-hour credits. All decisions regarding transfer hours shall be made by the graduate liaison in consultation with the admitted student.

- **Language Hours:** If a student's advisory committee believes that the student's proposed dissertation topic necessitates competence in one or more scholarly languages, the committee may require the student to demonstrate such competence before beginning work on the dissertation.
- **Hours Taken in Other Departments:** Typically, no work in other departments is required for the Ph.D. degree in Philosophy. However, a student’s prospective research area may make such work a sensible and even necessary element. In such cases, the student should consult with the advisory committee or, if the committee is not yet formed, with the Graduate Liaison. Subject to approval, up to twelve hours outside philosophy may be counted toward the Ph.D. degree. (Requests to exceed this limit must be approved by the faculty as a whole.)

The Advisory Committee

The function of the Advisory Committee is to provide the student with guidance tailored to her particular interests and prospective area of specialization. The committee consults with the student regarding remaining course selection, preparation for the general exam, and, ultimately, serves as the student’s dissertation committee.

The Advisory Committee is comprised of:

- one Philosophy faculty member to serve as chair and primary advisor, ordinarily the faculty member whose research and teaching area most closely aligns with the student’s prospective research area;
- two additional Philosophy faculty members the student identifies as helpful to her learning and development;
- one Graduate College representative (i.e., an OU faculty member from a department other than Philosophy).

Students should form their Advisory Committees no later than their fourth semester, if entering with a BA. For students entering with an M.A. degree – particularly those transferring a significant amount of prior coursework – the committee should be formed sooner, ideally in the second semester.

Before the end of the semester in which her committee is formed, the student should

organize and hold a meeting with her full committee. The purpose of this meeting is to review the student's existing coursework and discuss what coursework remains, with the committee advising the student about completion of requirements and any additional matters that bear on the student's progress and prospective research area. The student should also discuss her early ideas regarding the dissertation project. In this meeting, the student and committee will complete the Advisory Committee Report (ACR) and the student will then submit it to the Graduate College for approval.

The Qualifying Exam

Each student must take the Ph.D. Qualifying Exam in order to continue in the program after completing a certain amount of coursework. The exam is conducted each spring semester, at a date established by the Graduate Liaison.

Timing and eligibility for the qualifying exam differ depending upon whether a student applies prior graduate coursework when they enter the Ph.D. program, as follows:

Eligibility and Timing

- **Ph.D. students applying no prior graduate credit:** Students entering the program in fall will take the exam in their fourth semester. Students who have entered the program in spring semester will take the exam in their fifth semester. To be eligible for the exam, the student must have completed 21 credit hours with a GPA of 3.5. Students who do not meet this requirement may not continue in the Ph.D. program but may apply to the M.A. program.
- **Ph.D. students applying 18 hours of prior graduate credit:** Students entering the program in fall will take the exam in their second semester. Students who have entered the program in spring semester will take the exam in their third semester. To be eligible for the exam, the student must have completed 9 credit hours with a GPA of 3.5. Students who do not meet this requirement may not continue in the Ph.D. program.

To complete the qualifying exam, students will select two of their papers produced during their coursework and intensively revise and polish these papers. (Students who have transferred in credit from other institutions may choose no more than one paper from coursework performed elsewhere.) Revisions should incorporate feedback received from their course professors and students are encouraged to solicit additional feedback from faculty and peers. The two revised and polished papers are then submitted to the exam committee at a deadline established annually by the Graduate Liaison. The exam committee will evaluate the written work and, if both written

papers are judged satisfactory, select one paper for oral examination. The committee and student will then meet and conduct the oral exam on the selected paper. Students should not delay undertaking revisions until the exam semester, but should be working on these papers alongside their coursework in earlier semesters, and in particular when taking the Writing Seminar.

Exam Scoring and Results

The exam is evaluated by a committee of three faculty chosen annually by the Graduate Liaison. The qualifying exam is graded according to the following scale:

A = Ph.D. qualified

B = M.A. qualified

C = fail

Students receiving an A score: Continue in the Ph.D. program.

Additionally, students who wish to do so, may also, upon completion of 36 hours of graduate coursework, apply to the Graduate College to receive their M.A. That is, once a Ph.D. student has completed the qualifying exam and the required hours, she is eligible to receive the M.A. degree.

Students receiving a B score: Students who hold a Bachelor's degree and receive a grade of B will transfer into the M.A. program and will not continue in the Ph.D. program. Students who hold an M.A. degree and receive a grade of B will not continue in the program.

Students receiving a C score: Students receiving a C on the exam may not continue in the Ph.D. program, nor will such students be automatically transferred to the M.A. program. Such students may apply to the M.A. program. If admitted, such students will take the M.A. exam, following the guidelines and requirements outlined for the M.A. program and exam given above. If the M.A. exam is failed, the student will leave the program without an M.A.

The General Exam

The general exam is the final stage before the student begins work on the Ph.D. dissertation. Upon passing this exam, the student is classified as ABD (All But Dissertation). In order to take the general exam, students must get approval from their advisory committee chair. The department strongly encourages students to take the general exam early in the sixth semester (for bachelor's holders) or in the fourth

semester (for M.A. holders).

The general exam is an area examination used to evaluate the student's readiness to perform professional work in her research area. It assesses the student's knowledge of, and facility and competence with, her chosen area of focus and thus is not limited to any formal coursework. The standard for success on the exam is that the student displays a mastery of her materials that would qualify her to teach graduate level courses in her chosen area. In accord with this standard, students should not rely exclusively on their coursework for preparation, but should, in consultation with the advisory committee, pursue private study of key texts and issues. Some students elect to take an independent study with their advisor in preparation for the exam and all students should consult with their advisors and advisory committees about recommended readings or avenues of study. Students are also encouraged to review samples of past examinations, available [here](#).

Exam Structure

Each student will need to identify an area of specialization in which to be examined, one that reflects their training and aligns with their prospective dissertation focus. The student may select an area from the list below or, if requesting an area not shown here, apply for an alternative. Alternative areas not listed here require approval of the Graduate Studies Committee.

Exam Areas: Aesthetics; Ancient Greek Philosophy; Early Chinese Philosophy; Epistemology; Ethics; Metaphysics; Modern European Philosophy; Native American Philosophy; Philosophy of Education; Philosophy of Language; Philosophy of Law; Philosophy of Mind; Philosophy of Race; Philosophy of Religion; Philosophy of Science; Philosophy of Social Science; Social Philosophy; Political Philosophy.

The exam consists in both written and oral examination. The chair of the student's advisory committee, in consultation with the committee, composes the questions for the written exam. Before it is given, the exam is approved by all members of the student's advisory committee. The student will take the written portion of the exam *in situ* over a four-hour period and must complete the exam without notes or texts. The written exam is then evaluated by the student's advisory committee and, typically within one week, the student sits for oral examination on her written work with her full advisory committee.

Evaluation of the Exam

The student's full advisory committee will evaluate both the written and oral portions of the exam. Among the guidelines used in evaluating the exam are facility of written and oral expression, breadth and depth of understanding of the subject matter, familiarity with the relevant primary and secondary literature, and mastery of argumentation. The committee will assign one of the following evaluations to the exam:

Pass: The student is ABD.

Pass Conditional: The student will need to complete remedial work, as specified by the committee, in order to achieve a full pass and ABD status.

Fail: If the student's exam is judged unsatisfactory, they student may, with the advisory committee's approval, apply to repeat the examination for a second and final time in a subsequent semester.

The results of the exam must be communicated to the Graduate College within 72 hours of oral exam.

The Prospectus and Dissertation

Following completion of the general exam, the student's remaining work will consist in developing the prospectus and then writing the dissertation.

Prospectus: The prospectus is a written overview of plans for the dissertation. Its function is to provide an early view to the Advisory Committee of the arguments and literature with which the student will be working. Advisors may differ in their expectations for the prospectus, so the student should confer with her advisor about the exact form and format expected. However, a typical prospectus will contain:

- an abstract of the dissertation as a whole
- a more detailed and substantive summary of the project as a whole
- an outline of the dissertation chapters or papers, with substantive abstracts for each
- a bibliography of the literature with which the student will work.

Once a final draft of the prospectus is developed, students should deliver it for feedback and approval to the full advisory committee. Some dissertation advisors may additionally wish their students to sit for an oral discussion of the prospectus with the full committee.

Dissertation: The department allows Ph.D. students to compose dissertations

in two distinct formats, and each student should confer with her advisor and committee about which model best suits her work.

- **Traditional Format:** The traditional model is akin to a book format, with the dissertation developing one primary argument, extended over multiple chapters.
- **Paper Format:** In the paper format dissertation, the student produces three to four free-standing papers, each making a novel argument and following the form commonly seen in journal articles. The papers should have a thematic link and should be situated with both a formal introduction and conclusion that situates the papers as a coherent set.

As students pass into the stage of writing the dissertation, the department encourages them to stay in close contact not only with their committees, but also with the Graduate College staff, who can identify key deadlines for milestones and assist with necessary paperwork, and with the department's Placement Director. The Placement Director will assist students with developing their job-seeking materials and can offer mentoring through job-seeking issues.

Recommended Schedules

Each student's progress through the program is unique. However, the timelines given here should serve to alert students to key milestones and what the department considers optimal timing for these. A more detailed overview of advising stages and milestones may be found [here](#).

Recommended Schedule for Ph.D Students entering with a Bachelor's Degree

Semester		Course-work hours
1	Begin coursework (9 credit hours)	9
2	Continue coursework (9 credit hours), including Proseminar	18
3	Continue coursework (9 credit hours), including Writing Seminar Undertake revision of papers identified for Qualifying Exam	27
4	Continue coursework (9 credit hours) Continue revision of papers identified for Qualifying Exam Take Qualifying Exam Form Advisory Committee; hold Advisory Committee meeting	36
5	Continue coursework (6 credit hours) Prepare for General Exam	42

6	Continue coursework (6 credit hours) Take General Exam Begin work on dissertation prospectus	48
7	Enroll in dissertation hours Write dissertation prospectus	48
8	Enroll in dissertation hours Complete and defend prospectus Begin writing dissertation Begin meeting with Placement Director	48
9	Complete coursework, including Writing Seminar Enroll in dissertation hours Continue writing dissertation	51
10+	Continue writing dissertation...until defense	51

Recommended Schedule for Ph.D Students applying 18 hours of previous work

Semester		Course-work hours
1	Begin coursework (9 credit hours), including Writing Seminar Undertake revision of papers identified for Qualifying Exam	27
2	Continue coursework (9 credit hours), including Proseminar Continue revision of papers identified for Qualifying Exam Take Qualifying Exam Form Advisory Committee; hold Advisory Committee meeting	36
3	Continue coursework (6 credit hours) Prepare for General Exam	42
4	Continue coursework (6 credit hours) Take General Exam Begin work on dissertation prospectus	48
5	Enroll in dissertation hours Write dissertation prospectus	48
6	Enroll in dissertation hours Complete and defend prospectus Begin writing dissertation Begin meeting with Placement Director	48
7	Complete coursework, including Writing Seminar Enroll in dissertation hours Continue writing dissertation	51
8	Continue writing dissertation...until defense	51

*The number of hours taken in transfer will naturally influence how many semesters of coursework a student will need to complete requirements. However, students should note that the completion of 9 hours is required prior to taking the qualifying exam and so should plan to take 9 hours in their first semester.

Financial Support

The Department of Philosophy offers graduate assistantships, described [here](#).

Students receiving financial aid in the form of assistantships will maintain that aid for the award period so long as they continue to make satisfactory progress toward completion of the degree. Satisfactory progress requires:

- Completion of a minimum of twelve credit hours per calendar year
- Maintaining a 3.25 GPA
- For the Ph.D. program, completion of 51 credit hours (exclusive of dissertation hours) by the end of the sixth semester (if entering with a bachelor's degree) or by the fourth semester (if entering with an M.A. degree that transfers thirty credit hours)
- For the Ph.D. program, passing the Ph.D. General Exam and securing approval of the prospectus by the end of the student's eighth semester (if entering with a bachelor's degree) or by the end of the fifth semester (if entering with an M.A. degree that transfers thirty credit hours)

A student who does not satisfy any one of these conditions forfeits her presumption of continued financial aid and decisions about her continued aid will be made on a competitive basis (with new and returning students).