Graduate Degree Requirements

Department of Philosophy
McMicken College of Arts and Sciences
University of Cincinnati

Revised 12 September 2014

1. General

General requirements for the receipt of graduate degrees are set by the University Dean for Research and Advanced Studies. Please consult the current *University Graduate Handbook* for the current requirements. University requirements supercede all departmental requirements.

If any student wishes to be exempted from any of the requirements set forth in this document, or wishes to be subject to alternative requirements, he or she may submit a petition stating his or her request to the Director of Graduate Studies within the Department of Philosophy (DGS). In most cases, the petition will be put to a vote by the faculty present at the next department meeting at which time can be afforded to the matter.

2. Enrollment requirements and time limits

All students receiving a graduate assistantship or Taft fellowship must maintain full-time student status as determined by the McMicken College of Arts and Sciences, Graduate School, or other funding body. Students who have not yet completed their course requirements (see below) are expected to enroll in courses. Students who have completed their course requirements but who have not yet advanced to candidacy may take as many credits as necessary in the form of “Graduate Readings,” enrolling in the section number associated with the student’s primary advisor or the DGS. Students who have advanced to candidacy may take all credits each term in the form of “Dissertation Research”.

Students who are no longer taking classes and who are not receiving financial aid must maintain their student status as determined by the McMicken College of Arts and Sciences, the Graduate School, or other governing bodies. Note that special rules pertain to international students.

3. Evaluation of students

3.1. Consultation with DGS

Twice each academic year, the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) will contact each student to review his or her progress toward his or her degree objectives. This will include a review of the recent evaluations provided by the student’s mentors (see sections 3.2 and 3.3).
3.2. Evaluation of performance in courses

In advance of each graduate review meeting, each instructor is expected to write a brief report on the performance of each of the philosophy graduate students in any graduate-level course that he or she may have taught that term. The report should report the grade received and describe the student’s performance. The reports on each student are to be collected in that student’s personnel file and will be available for inspection by that student and by faculty upon request.

3.3. Evaluation of performance as teaching or research assistant

In advance of each graduate review meeting, each instructor who has had the help of a graduate assistant is expected to write an evaluation of each assistant’s performance. The reports on each student are to be collected in that student’s personnel file and will be available for inspection by that student and by faculty upon request. (See also section 4, “Teaching”, below.)

3.4. Annual review

Twice each year the Graduate Faculty of the Department will conduct a review of each student. For each student, the department will decide whether that student will (a) be continued in the program, and (b) be offered financial support, for example in the form of a Graduate Assistantship (GA) or University Graduate Scholarship (UGS), (c) continued with qualification, or (d) discontinued.

Continuation in the program will be contingent upon the student’s having made good progress toward his or her degree objectives since the time of the last review. Participation in the intellectual life of the department will also be a consideration.

Graduate Assistantships are awarded on a competitive basis. Reappointment as a Graduate Assistant will be contingent upon strong academic performance, continued progress toward the Ph.D. and participation in the intellectual life of the department. In addition, reappointment as a GA will depend on the student’s having performed well as an assistant in previous assignments. Reappointment as a GA will depend on the number of assistantships awarded to the department by the Dean of the Graduate School and the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. Students whose performance in previous assignments is not satisfactory may not have their awards continued.

Violation of the University, Graduate School, or McMicken College of Arts and Sciences student codes of conduct can be the basis for immediate termination of financial awards, or for termination from the Department. Such violations include but are not limited to plagiarism and other failures of academic integrity.

Students who hold financial awards must be able to complete the duties associated with those awards. Any student who is unable or unfit to complete the duties associated with their award may have it suspended or withdrawn.
Decisions regarding removal of financial awards will be made by the Faculty of the department, upon the recommendation of the DGS and the Graduate Studies Committee, and can be appealed to the Head of the Department of Philosophy.

4. Teaching by Graduate Students

4.1. Assignments

The assignments of each Graduate Assistant will be determined by the Director of Graduate Studies and the Department Head in advance of each term. An effort will be made to accommodate the preferences of the student; however, the final decision will be based also on curricular needs, the skills of the available assistants, and the desirability of giving each student experience in a variety of settings. The workload of a student assisting another instructor should not exceed 20 hours per week. Students who find that they are devoting more time than this to their responsibilities should bring this fact to the attention of the primary instructor and ask for a reduction in workload. Advanced students may sometimes be given the opportunity to teach their own sections of undergraduate courses.

4.2. Mentoring

When a graduate student is scheduled to teach a course that he or she has not taught on his or her own before, the graduate student is to seek out some member of the faculty who is willing to serve as a mentor for that course. Prior to the ordering of books for the course, the mentor and graduate student should meet to discuss the course content and plan, including the choice of readings, the basic structure of the assignments and the grading method. It is recommended that the mentor make two pre-arranged visits to the course. Further visits may be requested by the graduate student. These visits should be followed by a discussion between the mentor and the graduate student. The graduate student is encouraged to consult with the mentor on any matters where the mentor’s advice might be helpful, for instance, in the design and grading of assignments. Optionally, the graduate student may request that the mentor review the course evaluations written by the students in the class. The mentor is expected to write a brief report of his or her own design concerning the course, which will be entered into the graduate student’s file and copied to the student. If a student teaches the same course in subsequent terms, a mentor should be advised of any significant changes in textbooks and assignments.

4.3. Summer Teaching

It is the understanding of the department that teaching is an integral part of graduate training, and therefore that summer teaching by graduate students is to be encouraged. Selection of graduate students for summer teaching is based primarily on teaching experience and ability.
5. Requirements for a Ph.D.: The Traditional Track

The Philosophy Department recognizes two tracks leading to the receipt of a Ph.D. in Philosophy, the “traditional” track and the “sciences” track. This section sets out the requirements for the traditional track. See section 6 for the requirements for the sciences track.

5.1. Overview

A normal course of study would comprise approximately three years of course work, with the third year devoted to the qualifying exam and advancing to candidacy, followed by two years of work on the dissertation. The University requires students to earn 90 semester credit hours before being awarded a Ph.D.

5.2. General requirements

Engagement: Students are expected to participate in the intellectual life of the department. In particular, they are expected to regularly attend the lectures of invited speakers and to attend the annual colloquium.

Teaching: Students must receive a significant amount of teaching experience.

5.3. Course requirements

Students must complete twelve (12) semester courses in Philosophy, plus a first-year proseminar, teaching seminar, and proposal writing seminar. Altogether, this means each student must complete fifteen (15) semester courses in philosophy, as a minimum. The grade in each course counted toward the eighteen must be at least a B–, and in order to be considered making good progress, a student’s grade point average should be at least 3.5. Independent study courses do not count toward this requirement. Coursework will be completed in the first three years of study.

Logic Requirement: The 12 courses must include one advanced course in logic, normally PHIL 8042. (a) Students who need remedial logic training before taking the required course must take a less advanced course first, and it does not count toward the 12 courses required for the degree. (b) Students with a strong background in logic may place out of this requirement by examination (but they will still be required to take 12 courses), or to take an alternative advanced logic course.

First-year proseminar: First-year Ph.D. students are to take a course that has been designated as the proseminar. This will be offered in the Fall Term and is expected to be a writing intensive course. The objective of this class is to develop skills for close reading of philosophical texts and for clear and careful writing.

Teaching Seminar: In each of the first two years of study, all students will attend a Teaching Seminar conducted by the Department. This seminar will nurture skills necessary for teaching philosophy and help students prepare for teaching their own courses. These skills include
teaching of writing, designing syllabi and assignments, and grading policies and practices; as well as practical skills such as ordering textbooks, requesting examination and desk copies, and similar.

Dissertation Proposal /Prospectus Writing Seminar: All Ph.D. students in the process of writing a dissertation proposal/prospectus (viz., all those in the spring of their third year or later who have not advanced to candidacy) must attend a proposal writing seminar conducted by the Graduate Faculty of the Department. The seminar will be conducted as a workshop, with each student having the goal of having their dissertation proposal/prospectus approved by their committee at the end of the seminar. Eligible students must repeat this seminar in every term that it is offered until the proposal/prospectus has been approved. No grade will be finalized for any term until the proposal/prospectus has been approved.

Distribution Requirements: For purposes of defining the distribution requirements, the “areas” of philosophy are defined as (1) History of Philosophy; (2) Core Problems in Philosophy; (3) Philosophy of Science; (4) Value Theory. Students must take courses in each of these areas from Graduate Faculty of the Department of Philosophy.

History: Students must take at least one course in each of two of the following six sub-areas: (1) Ancient; (2) Medieval and Renaissance; (3) Modern; (4) 19th Century; (5) Pragmatism; (6) Early Analytic.

Core Problems: Students must take at least one course in each of two of the following four sub-areas: (1) Metaphysics; (2) Epistemology; (3) Language and Logic; (4) Mind. (The required logic course does not also satisfy this distribution requirement.)

Philosophy of Science: Students must take at least one course in the philosophy of science. The recognized sub-areas of the philosophy of science are: (1) History and Philosophy of Science; (2) Contemporary Philosophy of Science; (3) Physical Sciences; (4) Social Sciences; (5) Life Sciences; (6) Cognitive Sciences.

Value Theory: Students must take at least one course in each of two of the following three sub-areas: (1) Ethics; (2) Social and Political Philosophy; (3) Aesthetics.

Electives: Students must take four (4) additional courses in Philosophy or conducted by Graduate Faculty of the Department, normally in the area (as defined above) in which they expect to write a dissertation.

Each instructor will decide which (if any) of these areas and sub-areas his or her course belongs to. In cases where a course belongs to more than one sub-area, students may choose which requirement it will satisfy. (No course can be used to satisfy more than one distribution requirement.) The final decision as to which requirement a course will satisfy need not be made until that time when the DGS certifies that the student has satisfied the course requirements.
5.4. Pre-doctoral work

Before beginning work on the dissertation, students must accomplish three tasks.

Qualifying Exam. Each student must take one Qualifying Exam in a recognized sub-area of philosophy outside their area of specialization. Areas and sub-areas are determined according to the course distribution requirements, above. The exam should be taken at the beginning of the third year of study. Reading lists for each sub-area are standardized and will be made available by the faculty in a timely manner. Students will be allocated 72 hours to take the exam, which will consist of five questions of which the student must answer three. Qualifying exams will be written and graded by a committee of two faculty members chosen by the student and approved by the Director of Graduate Studies. Qualifying exams will be graded on a pass/fail basis. In case a student should fail an exam, they may make a second attempt prior to the start of the next semester of study. Failure to pass an exam on the second attempt prevents a student from advancing to candidacy.

All Ph.D. students will take their exam beginning on the Tuesday of the week before classes start for their third year of study. Exams will be made available at 12:00pm on Tuesday, and must be submitted by 12:00pm on the following Friday. Students will be informed of the results by the Director of Graduate Studies no later than 14 days after the exam has been submitted. The examiners’ grading decisions are final. Second attempts will be conducted beginning on the Tuesday of the week after final exam week of the fall semester.

Conference Paper. Students must compose a conference length paper suitable for presentation at a professional meeting (such as the APA, PSA, SPP, etc.). The paper will be written in consultation with a faculty advisor chosen by the student. The student is expected to present the paper at a refereed and selective professional (i.e., not student) conference. If reasonable efforts to present an approved paper to an approved conference do not succeed, the student may present the paper at a department colloquium instead.

Dissertation Prospectus. The student must nominate a committee of three or more faculty who agree to serve as the student’s dissertation committee. One or more of these must be designated the chair of the committee. The names of the committee members should be communicated to the DGS, who will confirm their willingness to serve. The student must attend the Dissertation Prospectus writing seminar, and write a dissertation prospectus. The committee must hold an oral defense of the prospectus and area of specialization. The committee will certify that the student is ready to move forward with the dissertation by approving the advancement to candidacy

By the start of the third year, students in the traditional track are expected to have completed their qualifying exam. By the end of the third year students are expected to have written their dissertation prospectus. Students are expected to have completed all of these tasks (QE exam, conference paper and prospectus) by the end of the summer of the third year. When these tasks have been completed, the student will be formally advanced to candidacy.
All students must enroll in at least one philosophy graduate course per semester until they advance to candidacy. This can be a seminar or a directed reading comensurate with a seminar, but it must be taken for a letter grade.

5.5. Additional requirements and recommendations

A student’s dissertation committee may require the student to take additional courses inside or outside the Philosophy department in pertinent fields of study. For example, a student working in Aesthetics might be required to take Art History courses, or a student working in the Philosophy of Mind might be required to take certain psychology courses. A student working in the history of philosophy might be required to demonstrate competence in a foreign language.

All students are advised to consider adding a fourth dissertation committee member from outside the department. This may be someone in another department at the University, or it may be someone from another philosophy department at another university.

6. Requirements for a Ph.D.: The Sciences Track

6.1. Overview

The requirements for the sciences track are largely the same as for the traditional track. The differences are: (1) a stronger distribution requirement in Philosophy of Science; (2) a “Research Tools” requirement requiring courses outside of Philosophy; (3) students may delay advancing to candidacy by one term.

6.2. General requirements

These are the same as for the traditional track. See section 5.1.

6.3. Course requirements

The course requirements in the sciences track are the same as in the traditional track, with the exception that the requirement of four additional electives is eliminated, and for the philosophy of science distribution requirement, the following is substituted:

*Philosophy of Science:* Students in the Sciences Track must take at least four courses in the Philosophy of Science. (A) At least one course must be in the general history or philosophy of science. (B) They must take at least one course in two of the following four sub-areas: (1) Physical Sciences; (2) Social Sciences; (3) Life Sciences; (4) Cognitive Sciences.

6.4. Pre-doctoral work

Students in the sciences track must complete the same pre-doctoral work outlined in section 5.4 above. This includes writing a competence paper, taking one qualifying exam, and undergoing a dissertation prospectus review.
Students in the sciences track should complete their pre-doctoral work by the end of the first term of the fourth year.

6.5. Additional requirements and recommendations

Students in the sciences track are subject to a different set of additional requirements.

Research Tools Requirement: Students must take four graduate courses from one or more departments in an empirical discipline, other than philosophy. One of these, but no more than one, may be a directed study. One of them must be in a formal topic (e.g., statistics, mathematics, computer science). These courses are to be chosen in consultation with an advisor (for students not yet at the dissertation stage) or dissertation committee, but in all cases the DGS is to be informed of the plan.

External Dissertation Committee Member: The dissertation committee must include a fourth member from outside the department. This person may be a member of the University of Cincinnati faculty or may be on the faculty at another university. Preferably this person will be an expert in a scientific field to which the student’s dissertation pertains.

7. Requirements for a Master’s Degree

There are three ways to earn the Master’s Degree in Philosophy: two thesis options, and one non-thesis option.

7.1. Master’s Degrees for students in the Ph.D. program

Students in, and remaining in, the Ph.D. program will be eligible to receive the Master’s Degree when they have completed all pre-doctoral work other than writing a dissertation proposal and being advanced to candidacy. (This is a non-thesis option.)

7.2. Master’s Degrees for students who completed their bachelor’s degree at UC

Students who are earning their undergraduate degree in philosophy or a related discipline at UC and certain designated partner universities may apply for the one-year Master’s Degree program (also known as the “4+1” or “BA/MA” program). These students may earn the Master’s Degree by completing 8 graduate courses in Philosophy (courses chosen in consultation with the DGS) and by submitting as a thesis a portfolio of papers written for those courses.

7.3. Students who enter the program seeking only an M.A.

In unusual circumstances, the Department may admit students who intend to complete only the Master’s Degree. (This is a thesis option.)
In order to receive a Master’s Degree, students must complete a minimum of 45 semester hours of graduate credit. 32 credit hours must be earned in eight (8) semester graduate level courses in the Philosophy Department. The grade in each course counted toward the eight (8) must be at least a B–. Independent study courses do not count toward this requirement. The remaining 13 credit hours may be earned as thesis research and preparation.

In addition, M.A. students must write a Master’s thesis under the supervision of a committee that includes at least three Philosophy Department faculty, one of whom is to be designated chair of the committee. The composition of the committee should be communicated to the DGS in writing as soon as it has been determined. The thesis will normally consist of 50-70 pages.

Students seeking a “Terminal M.A.” are not normally eligible for financial aid administered by the University.

7.4. Master’s Degrees for students who switch to a terminal M.A. program

Occasionally students who enter the Ph.D. program decide to conclude their graduate careers in the Philosophy Department with an M.A. There are two ways to do this. First, students who have completed six semester courses in the Philosophy Department may receive an M.A. by writing a Master’s Thesis (see 7.3). Second, students who have completed the course requirements for the Ph.D. may receive an M.A. by passing a qualifying exam and writing a competence paper (see 7.1).

Until a student formally declares his or her intention to conclude with an M.A., he or she will be expected to continue making progress toward a Ph.D. (So, for example, the student will have to take a full course load until the course requirement is complete.) Continuation of financial aid will be at the discretion of the department. If the student has completed the necessary courses, he or she will not need to take courses but may spend that last term writing the Master’s Thesis.

8. Transfer of Credits

1. General University Requirements: The Graduate Handbook states that receipt of the M.A. requires a minimum of 30 graduate credits, with at least the last half completed while in residence at the University of Cincinnati. Receipt of the Ph.D. requires a minimum of 90 semester credits, with at least the last 48 under the direction of faculty at the University of Cincinnati.

2. Credit for Courses Taken at Other Institutions: The normal maximum of number of course requirements that can be fulfilled by courses taken at other universities is as follows:

   M.A. Maximum of 2 courses.
   Ph.D. (student admitted without M.A.) Maximum of 3 courses.
   Ph.D. (student admitted with M.A.) Maximum of 6 courses.
The number of courses credited, up to the maximum, will be based on the following criteria: (1) course content and level; (2) quality of the institution at which the courses were taken; (3) competence of the instructor; (4) grade in the course, with an A normally required; and (5) student's overall record. Decisions about the credit for courses not taken at UC are wholly at the discretion of the Department. Such courses may excuse the student from particular distribution requirements, but do not reduce the total number of credits hours required for the degree, as determined by the University, Graduate School, College, or Department.