



Official Ph.D. Program Requirements

last updated 1/23/23

1. Coursework:

- a. Students must complete a minimum of 45 hours of approved graduate study.
- b. All Philosophy courses must be at the 5000 level or above.
- c. To provide a common experience in their first year, all incoming Ph.D. students are required to take in their first year the Values Proseminar (PHIL 5100), typically offered in the fall semester, and the Metaphysics and Epistemology Proseminar (PHIL 5550), typically offered in the spring semester. These are closed-admission proseminars, open only to first-year M.A. and Ph.D. students in Philosophy.
- d. No more than 6 hours of 5810 (Special Topics) may be counted toward the 45-hour requirement.
- e. No more than 9 hours of 5840 (Independent Study) may be counted toward the 45-hour requirement. Students may not take more than 6 credit hours of 5840 from any one faculty member. Students must receive permission in advance from the Director of Graduate Studies to take 5840 (see Non-Regular Courses: Policies and Applications).
- f. No more than 21 hours of credit may be transferred into the program from graduate programs outside CU Boulder or taken through the ACCESS program at CU Boulder. Credits that applied toward another completed Ph.D. degree may not be transferred into this program. All credit transfers must be approved by the Director of Graduate Studies. All Philosophy courses taken at the 5000 level or above, if taken for the master's degree at CU Boulder, may be applied toward the doctoral degree (if they otherwise satisfy the requirements of the Ph.D. program).
- g. No more than 9 hours of credit toward the graduation requirement may be taken in courses outside of Philosophy. These courses must be at the graduate level and should be relevant to the student's main areas of research or teaching interest. Students must receive permission in advance to take non-philosophy courses for degree credit (see Non-Regular Courses: Policies and Applications).

2. Distribution Requirements:

27 hours must be devoted to satisfying the following Distribution Requirements:

- a. *History of Philosophy* (9 Hours):
 - i. *Ancient Philosophy* (3 hours). Courses that fulfill this requirement:
 - PHIL 5010 - Single Philosopher
 - PHIL 5020 - Topics in the History of Philosophy

- PHIL 6000 - Seminar in the History of Philosophy
when those courses are on an ancient philosopher or topic in the period ranging from 5th c. BC through Augustine; others upon approval of the Director of Graduate Studies.

ii. *Modern Philosophy* (3 Hours). Courses that fulfill this requirement:

- PHIL 5010 - Single Philosopher
- PHIL 5020 - Topics in the History of Philosophy
- PHIL 6000 - Seminar in the History of Philosophy

when those courses are on a philosopher or topic in the history of early modern philosophy (17th-18th c.); others upon approval of the Director of Graduate Studies.

iii. *Open* (3 Hours): Courses that fulfill this requirement:

- PHIL 5010 - Single Philosopher
- PHIL 5020 - Topics in the History of Philosophy
- PHIL 6000 - Seminar in the History of Philosophy

when those courses are on a philosopher or topic in the period ranging from classical Greece through 1950 (including the history of early analytic philosophy and the history of early 20th century Continental philosophy).

Some courses, such as PHIL 5800 (Open Topics in Philosophy) or 5450 (History and Philosophy of Physics), are sometimes taught in a way that emphasizes historical readings and methods, in which case the Director of Graduate Studies should be consulted for History distribution approval.

b. *Metaphysics and Epistemology* (9 hours). Courses that fulfill this requirement:

- PHIL 5300 - Philosophy of Mind
- PHIL 5340 - Epistemology
- PHIL 5360 - Metaphysics
- PHIL 5370 - Free Will and Determinism
- PHIL 5400 - Philosophy of Science
- PHIL 5490 - Philosophy of Language
- PHIL 5550 - Metaphysics and Epistemology Proseminar
- PHIL 6300 - Seminar in Philosophy of Mind
- PHIL 6340 - Seminar in Epistemology
- PHIL 6380 - Seminar in Metaphysics
- PHIL 6400 - Seminar in Philosophy of Science
- PHIL 6490 - Seminar in Philosophy of Language
- others upon approval of the Director of Graduate Studies.

Courses that are primarily historical do not fulfill the requirement, nor does PHIL 5600 (Philosophy of Religion).

c. *Values* (9 Hours). Courses that fulfill this requirement:

- PHIL 5100 – Ethics (including when run as the Values Proseminar)
- PHIL 5110 - Contemporary Moral Theory
- PHIL 5120 - Philosophy and Animals
- PHIL 5150 - Topics in Applied Ethics
- PHIL 5200 - Contemporary Political Philosophy
- PHIL 5210 - Philosophy and Social Policy
- PHIL 5230 - Bioethics and Public Policy
- PHIL 5240 - Seminar in Environmental Philosophy
- PHIL 5260 - Philosophy of Law
- PHIL 5290 - Topics in Values and Social Policy
- PHIL 5470 - Probability and Rational Choice
- PHIL 5700 - Aesthetics
- PHIL 6100 - Seminar in Ethics
- PHIL 6200 - Seminar in Social and Political Philosophy
- others upon approval of the Director of Graduate Studies.

Ph.D. students are required to take the Values proseminar (PHIL 5100) being offered in their first year in the program the year.

Students must earn an average of A– (minimum 3.66 on a 4-point scale) over any 9 hours in each of the three categories in order to satisfy the Distribution Requirements. PHIL 5840 (Independent Study) may not count towards the Distribution Requirements.

3. Language and Technical Requirement:

Every Ph.D. student must discuss with his or her Advisor whether there are any language and/or technical requirements that the Advisor deems to be essential prerequisites to the dissertation research, and, if so, what they are. The Advisor's recommendations must then be brought before the Department for its approval, at the earliest opportunity, and all requirements decided upon by the Department must be fulfilled by the student before the student is Advanced to Candidacy.

4. Logic:

Students must demonstrate competence in logic by earning a grade of B– or better in PHIL 2440 (Symbolic Logic), or an equivalent course, or in some more advanced logic course. Students may satisfy this requirement either by taking all the examinations in PHIL 2440 and averaging at least a B– or by earning at least a B– on the comprehensive final examination offered in that course each semester. Students may be exempted from this requirement by the Director of Graduate Studies if they have done suitable work in formal logic at other institutions, or in other departments at CU Boulder.

5. Diagnostic Paper:

During the first week of the third semester of study in the PhD program, each student who did not enter our Ph.D. program with two years of prior graduate work in philosophy will submit a Diagnostic Paper in a core area of philosophy. It may be an expanded version of a paper written for a first-year class, and should be 4,500-8,000 words in length.

In the case of students who are entering our Ph.D. program with two years of prior graduate work in philosophy, a 4,500-to-8,000-word diagnostic paper must be submitted during the student's first semester in the Ph.D. program. This paper can be a paper produced for a course here. Students entering the Ph.D. program with an M.A. degree in philosophy from CU Boulder are exempt from this requirement.

In either case, a committee composed of three members specializing in the appropriate area and appointed by the Director of Graduate Studies will evaluate the work and alert students to any problems or difficulties.

6. Qualifying Paper:

During the first week of the fifth semester of graduate study, each student who did not enter our Ph.D. program with two years of prior graduate work in philosophy is required to submit two original papers in an area of the student's choice. Students who enter the program with two years of prior graduate work in philosophy should submit these Qualifying Papers during the first week of the *third* semester of graduate study in the Ph.D. program.

Well in advance of the time at which a student's Qualifying Paper is due, the student must arrange for a tenured or tenure-track faculty member to advise the student during the preparation of his or her paper. That faculty member will also serve on the paper's Qualifying Paper Committee but will not chair it. The other two members of the Committee will be selected by the Director of Graduate Studies and will remain anonymous to the student; the identity of the student will also be withheld from these Committee members. The Qualifying Paper Committee shall provide the student with at least one set of written comments evaluating the paper.

The Qualifying Paper requirement consists of two papers. The first paper should be an argumentative paper with a clear thesis, between 5,000 and 8,000 words in length. It should have a narrow focus, with an original idea or criticism, and should evince the sophistication needed to lay it out clearly. It should be written for a professional reader, as is the case for a journal, and get to the thesis quickly, just as one must when writing a publishable paper. It should not be a comprehensive literature review. The paper should demonstrate original thinking and analysis, and attempt to make an original contribution to the question; it should not simply be a reporting of other people's views.

The second paper should be a literature review for the area in which the first paper is

written. It should consist of the exposition of a problem or issue and the various positions and arguments relevant to it. For example, a paper on compatibilism might lay out some recent arguments for compatibilism, together with some objections and problems that have been raised in the literature. A literature review paper on Aristotle's theory of cause might lay out some recent major interpretations of the doctrine of cause, together with some problems and difficulties with these interpretations. The goal is to demonstrate a broad and critical grasp of the current literature on a problem or issue. The literature review should be 4,000 to 7,000 words in length.

Qualifying Papers must not have been submitted for a graduate course or seminar, including independent study courses. They may, however, be substantially revised and extended versions of papers submitted for a course or seminar. Students holding an M.A. before being admitted to the Ph.D. program may submit papers based on their M.A. thesis as Qualifying Papers, but only after revision in consultation with their Qualifying Paper Advisor.

The Qualifying Paper Committee will assign the combined papers one of the following grades:

- PASS WITH DISTINCTION
- PASS
- REVISE AND RESUBMIT (for first-round papers only)
- DOES NOT PASS.

If the combined papers receive a grade of 'REVISE AND RESUBMIT' or 'DOES NOT PASS', the student will have one semester to submit revised or distinct papers. Revised papers will be evaluated by the same committee that reviewed the student's initial submission; papers on a new topic might be evaluated by a different committee. If the second-round submission receives an overall grade of 'DOES NOT PASS', the student has the option to appeal. In that case, the Director of Graduate Studies will select another committee to re-read the same second-round papers and make a final decision.

7. Being "Advanced to Prospectus Stage" [formerly known as "Approved for Candidacy"]:

After a student has (i) fulfilled the Logic Requirement, (ii) submitted a Diagnostic Paper, (iii) passed their Qualifying Paper, and (iv) completed their Coursework while (v) fulfilling the Distribution Requirements, the Department will hold a vote on whether the student shall be *advanced to prospectus stage*. The student also needs to have completed any language or technical requirements that the Department deems essential prerequisites to the student's dissertation research.

In deciding whether to *advance a student to prospectus stage*, the faculty aims to determine the student's prospects for completing the Ph.D. successfully and in a timely fashion. Factors considered by the faculty include evaluations by instructors following

each graduate course, the student's GPA, the strength of the student's Qualifying Paper, whether the student has completed the relevant program requirements within the expected timeframe, whether the student has been able to identify a promising area of research, whether a faculty member is willing to supervise the Dissertation, and whether a Dissertation Committee can be formed.

Before the Department holds the vote on whether to approve a student for candidacy, the student should first identify their Advisor; this is the faculty member who will supervise the student's Prospectus and Dissertation.

Students may schedule their Prospectus Defense only after they have been *advanced to prospectus stage*.

8. Prospectus and Prospectus Defense:

Students must assemble a Prospectus Committee of five members; this includes the Chair, who will act as the student's Advisor for the Prospectus and will typically go on to supervise the student's Dissertation. Students need to have identified their Advisor before being approved for candidacy (see sec. 7).

The Prospectus Committee can include faculty members outside of the Department with the approval of the Director of Graduate Studies and the Graduate School. Students are encouraged to include one outside member, namely, the person who will eventually be the outside member of the student's Dissertation Committee (see below). The student must furnish the Graduate Program Assistant with a current CV for the outside member (in Word or PDF format, web links are not sufficient) at least six weeks before the Prospectus Defense; this is so that the outside member can be authorized by the Graduate School to sit on the committee. The outside member can be a CU Boulder faculty member outside Philosophy or a faculty member at another University, whether in Philosophy or another department.

Students submit to the Prospectus Committee a written dissertation Prospectus for examination. The Prospectus should be in the range of 4,500-7,500 words (excluding footnotes and bibliography) and must include: (i) an introduction to the dissertation topic; (ii) an annotated table of contents; and (iii) a full bibliography.

Once the student's Advisor deems the Prospectus document acceptable and ready to be defended, the student should distribute the document to the rest of the Prospectus Committee.

At least two weeks prior to the Prospectus defense, the student must formally apply for *advancement to candidacy* by filing the appropriate paperwork with the Graduate Program Assistant. (Being *advanced to candidacy*, which is done by the Graduate School, is different from the earlier step of being *advanced to prospectus stage*, which is done by the Department.)

After the Prospectus Committee has been given sufficient time to read the Prospectus document, the Committee will conduct the Prospectus Defense: an oral examination on the Prospectus and related topics. In case of failure, the examination may be repeated only once, and within one year of the original date.

9. Dissertation and Oral Defense:

At a time deemed appropriate by the candidate's Advisor, the candidate shall establish a Dissertation Committee for the final oral defense. The Dissertation Committee is typically composed of the same faculty who served on Prospectus Committee, though in the case of the Dissertation Committee it is required that at least one member be from outside the Department – either from CU Boulder in a field other than Philosophy or from outside the University entirely (whether in Philosophy or some other discipline). The outside member must be approved by the Graduate School.

A Dissertation being proposed for defense must be circulated to all members of the Committee two weeks prior to the act of scheduling the defense. A Dissertation defense can be scheduled if and only if at least four of the five Dissertation Committee members vote to allow it to be scheduled. This vote is to be coordinated and tallied by the Chair of the Dissertation Committee. The candidate is required to furnish each member of the Dissertation Committee, as well as the Department, with a copy of the Dissertation at least two weeks prior to the scheduled date of the oral defense. Public notice of the oral defense shall also be made at least two weeks prior to the scheduled date of the defense.

The Dissertation Oral is a public defense of a doctoral dissertation before the Philosophy faculty, graduate students, and other interested parties. After members of the Dissertation Committee and any other members of the graduate faculty present have concluded their questioning, Philosophy graduate students who have been admitted to the Dissertation stage may, with the consent of the Committee Chairperson, address questions to the candidate.

A typical doctoral dissertation is 150-200 pages in length (45,000-60,000 words) and takes the form of a monograph – a sustained, book-length argument in support of a single thesis. Students also have the option of writing a multi-paper dissertation, which consists of a series of at least three freestanding papers in addition to an introductory essay that frames the student's project as a whole and explains the theme that binds the other papers together.

Additional Program Information

A. Satisfactory progress:

Students are expected to make satisfactory progress toward the degree. Satisfactory progress consists in:

i. *First year:*

- satisfying the Logic Requirement
- completing 15-18 hours of coursework (typically 5-6 courses)
- in the case of students who are entering our Ph.D. program with two years of prior graduate work in philosophy or with an M.A. in philosophy, from here or elsewhere: submitting the Diagnostic Paper

ii. *Second year:*

- completing an additional 15-18 hours of course work (typically 5-6 courses)
- for students who do not have two years of prior graduate work in philosophy or an M.A. in philosophy: submitting the Diagnostic Paper
- in the case of students who are entering our Ph.D. program with two years of prior graduate work in philosophy or with an M.A. in philosophy, from here or elsewhere: submitting and passing the Qualifying Paper

iii. *Third year:*

- completing all remaining coursework (for a total of 45 hours, 27 of which satisfy the Distribution Requirements in the required areas)
- for students who do not have two years of prior graduate work in philosophy or an M.A. in philosophy: submitting and passing the Qualifying Paper
- satisfying any language or technical requirements
- choosing a Prospectus Chair / Dissertation Advisor
- being Advanced to the Prospectus Stage by the Department
- choosing a Prospectus Committee
- completing the Prospectus and passing the Prospectus Oral
- being formally Advanced to Candidacy by the Graduate School

iv. *Fourth year:*

- completing the Prospectus and passing the Prospectus Oral (if not already done in the third year)
- being formally Advanced to Candidacy by the Graduate School

v. *Fifth-Sixth year:*

- completing and defending the doctoral Dissertation (requires having enrolled in at least 30 total dissertation hours, only 10 of which can be taken in any one semester)

B. Graduate School Regulations:

- i. For the purposes of Graduate School requirements, a student will be deemed to have passed the Preliminary Examination after:
 - passing the Logic Requirement
 - completing all Distribution Requirements
 - submitting the Diagnostic Paper.
- ii. For the purposes of Graduate School requirements, a student will be deemed to have passed the Comprehensive Examination and to have Advanced to Candidacy after:
 - completing all coursework
 - passing the Qualifying Paper
 - completing any language and/or technical requirements
 - passing the Prospectus Oral.

C. The M.A. Degree for Ph.D. students:

Ph.D. students may earn a terminal M.A. by fulfilling the requirements of the M.A. program. A Ph.D. student who is not advanced to the dissertation stage by the Department or who has decided to leave the program may apply for a terminal M.A. degree. Such a student will be awarded an M.A. if *either* (a) the student has completed 33 or more hours of graduate-level coursework in Philosophy, including any approved graduate courses outside Philosophy, with an average grade of B+ or better, *or* (b) the student has passed the Qualifying Paper and completed 30 or more hours of graduate-level coursework in Philosophy, including any approved graduate courses outside Philosophy, with an average grade of B+ or better. In either case the student must meet the Logic Requirement, and standard restrictions on the number of credits earned from Special Topics, Independent Studies, and courses outside Philosophy apply.

Ph.D. students who are advanced to the dissertation stage and plan to continue on in the Ph.D. program can be awarded an M.A. degree upon request.

D. Advancing to the Prospectus Stage:

Students will advance to the Prospectus Stage only upon the approval of the entire Department, which will be advised by the Graduate Curriculum Committee and the Qualifying Paper Committee.

A decision regarding advancement to the prospectus stage will normally be made after the student completes all of the program requirements other than the Prospectus and Dissertation (i.e., the Logic Requirement, Coursework, Distribution Requirements, Diagnostic Paper, and Qualifying Paper). See item 7 above for more information.

E. Appeals Processes:

Students wishing to appeal a decision regarding advancement in the program must submit a written appeal to the Graduate Curriculum Committee, which will seek the advice of relevant members of the faculty. The Graduate Curriculum Committee may elect to advise the Department to overturn its decision regarding advancement; however, the final decision rests with the Department. Students wishing to appeal a decision regarding a Prospectus Oral or Dissertation Defense must submit a written appeal to the Committee that made the original decision.