Requirements for the Master of Arts Degree

The requirements include completion of eight courses and either a thesis or satisfaction of the preliminary distribution requirements. The preliminary distribution requirements may be satisfied either through the general program described in entry 2 under "Preliminary Requirements for the Ph.D." (below) or through the Major-Minors Program described in entry 4.

Mentor Requirement. Each first year student will, in consultation with the Director of Graduate Studies, select a faculty mentor with whom he or she meet occasionally during that year, to discuss areas of mutual philosophical interest and also the student’s progress in the program.

Course Requirements for the Ph.D.

To receive a Ph.D. degree in philosophy from Brown, a student must complete fifteen courses. Ten of these courses must be seminars, i.e., courses numbered above 201 or designated as seminars by the instructors. It is understood that a course will be designated by the instructor as a seminar only when it involves substantial discussion of philosophy among several people. (In order to use a course at the level of 201 or below towards satisfaction of the seminar requirements, a student must obtain a signed memo from the instructor to the graduate advisor, designating that course as a seminar. That memo is to be placed in the student's file.)

All students are required to register for the proseminar in both the first and second semester of their first year. The proseminar is intended to foster skills in critical analysis of texts and philosophical discussion, and to increase students’ exposure to significant contributions to the recent and contemporary literatures. The proseminar counts towards fulfillment of the course requirement.

Further, all students who are currently enrolled and who are either (a) in the fourth or any later year or (b) have completed a prospectus must be enrolled in and attend the Dissertation Workshop. Exceptions are permitted only for students who are visiting other institutions or who are for some other reason not living in the Providence area. Such exceptions will be granted, on a case by case basis, by the Director of Graduate Studies, to whom application should be made before the registration period. The Dissertation Workshop does not count toward the 15 course requirement. (Unenrolled ABD’s are welcome and can be encouraged to come.)

There are also two additional course requirements. (i) In the first semester of the third year, a student must enroll in an independent study course with a faculty member of his
or her choosing. The purpose of the course is to conduct a systematic review of a body of
literature and to prepare a written summary of the books and papers that have been
studied. The summary should describe prominent positions and their supporting
arguments, and also their relationships. The area surveyed will normally be one that the
student thinks of as having special significance for an envisioned dissertation. (ii) In the
second semester of the third year, a student must enroll in a “paper workshop” designed
to facilitate the writing of a substantial paper – a paper that has significantly greater scope
and depth than a normal seminar paper. The paper will normally be related to the
literature review, and will normally have some relevance to an envisioned dissertation;
but relevance to a dissertation is not a requirement. Thus, for example, a student who
wants to write a dissertation on meta-ethics but has a strong interest in epistemology
could work on a paper in the latter area. Neither of these courses counts towards the
fifteen course requirement.

Up to two courses offered by other departments may be counted toward the fifteen
required courses, provided they clearly contribute to the student’s philosophical progress
and they are approved in advance by the director of graduate studies.

Language Requirements for the Ph.D.

There is no general foreign language requirement. However, a student's dissertation
committee has the authority to require some degree of competence to use one or more
tools of research: perhaps a relevant foreign language (if the student is writing a historical
dissertation), statistics (if he/she is writing about inductive logic), and so on.

Leave of Absence and Returning from Leave

Applications for leave of absence should be submitted to the Department by November 1
for Semester II leaves, and by April 15 for leaves to be taken either in Semester I of the
following academic year, or for the entirety of that year.

Anyone intending to return from an approved leave of absence must inform the
Department by the April 15 preceding the academic year when he or she intends to
return. This is an important requirement that one must fulfill in order to be eligible for
financial aid.

Any period of leave will be counted as part of the financial aid commitment initially
given to an entering student, and there can be no guarantee that financial aid lost through
such a leave will be restored.

Rules Governing Transfer of Credits

Graduate courses completed elsewhere normally may be counted towards at most four of
the sixteen courses required by the Department for the doctorate. However, as many as
eight such courses may be counted through transfer credit towards the twenty-four credits
required by the Graduate School for the doctorate. Applications for such transfer of credit will be considered only following the student's completion of the equivalent of a full semester of work at Brown. Whenever a student proposes using such a course towards satisfaction of the general distribution requirements or as part of a ten-course major-minors program (see section 4 of the part entitled "Preliminary Requirements for the Ph.D." below), the applicant must provide to the Graduate Advisor a full description of the course content (including the syllabus and reading list, if available) and the written work completed for that course. If the applicant cannot provide such materials, he/she may be required to take an examination or write a term paper in the area of the course, which would serve as a basis for a decision on whether inclusion of that course is to be allowed. (In certain cases, provision of course materials may also be made a condition for the granting of transfer credit at all; and if such materials cannot be provided, a test or term paper may be required.)

**Preliminary Requirements for the Ph.D.**

1. **Third Year Review.** At the end of the third year, a committee of two faculty will conduct a review of the student’s progress to date. The committee will pay particular attention to the literature review and paper that have been written during the third year, but will also consider earlier work. The goal will be to determine whether the student has acquired sufficient knowledge and philosophical expertise, and demonstrated sufficient motivation, to make it reasonable to think that he or she is capable of writing a dissertation that meets the usual Department standards.

If the judgment of the Review Committee is negative, the student will be placed on warning and will be given one semester to produce a more satisfactory literature review and paper. A negative judgment at this second stage would result in termination.

2. **Distribution Requirements.** In the standard program the requirements are as follows. (When there is doubt about which requirement a course or seminar satisfies, the instructor will designate the category a course or seminar falls under for a particular student and inform the graduate representative in writing.) No course or seminar may be counted twice toward the fulfillment of these requirements. All courses must be at the three-digit level (PL100 or above). In what follows, seminars will always count as "courses."

(a) **Logic:** One course in logic.

(b) **Philosophy of Language/Mind/Science:** One course in philosophy of language, philosophy of mind or philosophy of science.

(c) **Ethics:** Two courses in ethics or political philosophy, at least one of which must be in ethics.
(d) **Epistemology**: One course in epistemology.

(e) **Metaphysics**: One course in metaphysics.

(f) **History of Philosophy**: Three courses in history of philosophy, at least one of which shall be in ancient or medieval philosophy and at least one of which shall be in modern, pre-twentieth century philosophy. A course whose topic is a contemporary philosopher may be included among the three.

3. **Extra work** may be required of graduate students in courses below 200 if they are taken for preliminary credit.

4. **Major-Minors Program**. The student may, alternatively, satisfy the preliminary requirement by means of an individually tailored major-minors program. In order to gain approval for such a program, the student must submit to the department, through the graduate representative, a written proposal for such a program, composed after consultation with members of the department. Each proposal will be evaluated by the graduate representative and another faculty member designated by the chair, who will approve such programs only if they satisfy the following conditions:

(a) The program must include at least four courses or seminars in a major field and three courses or seminars in each of two minor fields.

(b) Among the appropriate fields for such programs are aesthetics, epistemology, ethics, history of philosophy, logic, metaphysics, philosophy of language, philosophy of mind, philosophy of religion, philosophy of science and political philosophy. However, the student may propose either a major or a minor in other fields than those listed, and each proposal will be evaluated on its individual merits. The fields chosen by the student must be, in the opinion of the department, distinct enough to avoid the danger of overspecialization. For instance, a major in ancient philosophy, with minors in medieval and modern philosophy, would not be acceptable to the department because both the major and the minors are, in this case, in the general area of history of philosophy.

(c) As many as three courses from outside the philosophy department may be included in a major-minors program. Specifically, the entirety of the course work in one of the minor fields may lie outside the philosophy department.

(d) Proposals to the department of a major-minors program must be as specific as possible at the time of submission. When the proposal includes seminars whose topics change from year to year, the field and level of the seminar, e.g., in ethics and above 200, must be specified.

In many cases, a major-minors program will be approved by the department in the absence of a complete list of courses to be included in the program. Therefore, subsequent to approval, questions about minor revisions and changes in the program may arise; there may be doubt, for instance, about whether a seminar is properly included in a
field elected by the student and approved by the department. When such changes do not involve substantial revisions in the nature of the major or minor fields, the student need not seek departmental approval for them, but must do the following: obtain written certification from the instructor that the seminar is in the appropriate field and written certification from the graduate advisor that it fits happily into the student's general program. If the instructor or the graduate student advisor is in doubt about whether to issue such certification, he or she should raise the question before the department as a whole.

All students satisfying the preliminary requirement by means of an approved major-minors program must in addition complete courses as follows (where all courses must be at the three-digit level, PL100 or above, and where seminars will always count as "courses"):

(a) One course in logic.
(b) One course in ethics.
(c) One course in epistemology.
(d) One course in metaphysics.
(e) One course in ancient philosophy and one in early modern philosophy.

Rules Governing the Writing of Dissertations

1. Admission to Candidacy

Before beginning the seventh semester of full-time or equivalent residency at Brown, the student must gain admission to candidacy. Admission to candidacy is granted after passing the Third Year Review and upon approval of a Dissertation Prospectus by a Dissertation Committee. Failure to gain admission to candidacy within the specified period of time will result in automatic termination of all financial assistance unless an exception is made by majority vote of the Department.

(a) Principal Advisor. A student must select an adviser by the end of the sixth semester.

(b) Constitution of Dissertation Committee

(i) Choice of Committee Members. With the advice of the Principal Advisor and the consent of the Department the student will constitute a Dissertation Committee. The Principal Advisor will be ex officio Chair of the Committee.

(ii) Composition of the Committee. The Dissertation committee consists of three members. When appropriate, the Committee may recruit an additional member from outside the
Department. Normally an outside member of the Committee would be a member of the Brown Faculty working in an area of scholarship related to the dissertation topic. However, when convenient, scholars from other institutions may be invited to serve on the Committee. Students are encouraged to call upon and make use of the expertise of scholars outside the Department.

(c) Prospectus. The prospectus, a document approximately 3000 words in length, will outline the dissertation project. Normally it will treat of the central problems of the dissertation, methods of approaching these problems, anticipated difficulties, suggestions for surmounting these difficulties, and related matters, and will include a bibliography. It is important to avoid excessive narrowness in the bibliography. The student should focus on a specific topic for the dissertation, but should also have in view the lay of the land in adjacent areas within the relevant subfield(s). The student will be examined on the prospectus and its bibliography in an oral exam administered by the Principal Advisor and the Dissertation Committee, and open to the faculty at large.

(i) Approval. Approval of the prospectus signifies willingness on the part of each member of the Committee to work with the student on the project outlined; it does not constitute a guarantee that any member of the Committee will approve the completed dissertation.

(ii) Failure to Obtain Approval. If the Committee does not approve the prospectus, the student may opt for any of the following procedures: he/she may revise the prospectus until it satisfies the Committee; he/she may seek to constitute a new Committee with the advice of the Principal Advisor and the consent of the Department to reconsider the prospectus; he/she may seek to find a new Principal Advisor in consultation with the graduate representative and to constitute a new Committee to reconsider the prospectus.

2. Writing the Dissertation. After admission to candidacy the student sets to work on the dissertation. As the work proceeds, it is to be expected that the project will alter in various ways, and departures from the outline of the prospectus will occur. Minor changes require no special action on the part of the candidate or the Committee. The candidate should discuss major changes with the members of the Committee. The student may, even after admission to candidacy, wish to change completely her/his dissertation topic. In such instances, the Committee may require that a new prospectus be submitted and approved, or the student may wish to find a new Principal advisor or constitute a new Committee, and submit to that Committee a new prospectus. In either case, the student retains the status of candidate during such changes. Changes in the membership of the Committee after the student has been admitted to candidacy can be made with the agreement of all concerned, subject to approval by the Department.

As noted earlier, all students who are currently enrolled and who are either (a) in the fourth or any later year or (b) have completed a prospectus must be enrolled in and attend the Dissertation Workshop.

3. Completion of the Dissertation. The dissertation is considered completed once the Committee has certified that the candidate has made a satisfactory oral presentation and has gained final approval of the dissertation.
(a) **Penultimate Draft.** Candidates are expected to keep each member of the Committee informed of the progress of their work and to submit periodically drafts of portions of the dissertation to them for comment, criticism and discussion. If a candidate hopes to gain final approval in time for May graduation in a given year, a penultimate draft of the entire dissertation must be in the hands of each member of the Committee at least six weeks before the official Graduate School deadline for receiving doctoral dissertations as specified in the University Calendar. If a candidate hopes to gain final approval in the summer of a given year, special permission must be obtained from the Committee and a penultimate draft of the entire dissertation must be in the hands of each member of the Committee by Commencement Day of that year. This will give the candidate sufficient time for an adequate response to suggestions and demands for revision and rewriting by the Committee. If these deadlines are not met, the candidate cannot reasonably hope to receive final approval at the time desired.

(b) **Oral Presentation.** Once the Committee has received the penultimate draft, the student must make an oral presentation on the dissertation topic. The oral presentation need not cover the entire written dissertation, nor need it deal with every aspect of the dissertation topic. For instance, reading and defending a single chapter of the dissertation may be regarded by the Committee as satisfying this requirement. If the candidate's initial presentation does not satisfy the Committee, he/she will be required to make further presentations.

(c) **Final Approval.** After each member of the Committee has read the penultimate draft, the Committee will determine what revisions in the penultimate draft are needed to secure final approval and will formulate a set of instructions to aid the candidate in making such revisions. If necessary, the Principal Advisor may call a formal meeting of the Committee, with or without the candidate, to discuss and reach agreement on such instructions. After such revisions as are deemed necessary have been made by the candidate, the Committee will meet to decide whether or not the dissertation merits final approval.

**Rules Relating to Warning of Graduate Students**

**Terminology:**

**Termination:** The student's being separated from the Department's graduate program.

**Notification** (of termination): notification to the student that he/she is to be separated from the program.

**Warning:** given at any time informing the student that her/his work is progressing unsatisfactorily and that he/she may receive notification in three months in accordance with the following rules.

1. No student may be notified (and/or terminated) unless he/she has been previously warned one full semester in advance. (Thus, a student who is warned just prior to the beginning of a semester cannot be terminated until the end of the semester. A student who is warned in the course of a
semester cannot be terminated until the end of the following semester.) All warnings, notifications and other relevant communications shall be in writing. One copy is to be kept in the student's file. A student who has been warned or notified of termination will have the right to appeal this to a committee composed of the chair, the graduate student advisor and one other member of the department, to be appointed by the chair. This committee will report back to the department for a final decision.

2. As indicated above, under Preliminary Requirements, the work of all students will normally be evaluated in their fourth semester: the basis for the evaluation will include the student's record and performance in the preceding three semesters, including how much of the formal course work has been completed, and the quality of the file submitted by that student for evaluation.

3. The Graduate School recognizes three types of status: Good, Satisfactory, and on Warning. Students cannot continue in Good standing if they accumulate more than one Incomplete or NC. And will be placed on Warning if they accumulate more than 2 Incompletes and/or NCs at the same time. Moreover, students must strictly observe the University Rules governing Incompletes. (See a. and b. below.) To ensure compliance, the Department requires that all requests for Incompletes be approved both by the faculty member who is responsible for a course and by the Director of Graduate Studies.

   a. In exceptional circumstances, a course may be left incomplete (except for a regularly scheduled final examination--see paragraph 3 below). In such cases, a grade of 'I' will be assigned provided that the student has filed a request for extension of time to complete the work of the course and the instructor has consented to such a request (forms for this purpose are available from the Registrar's Office and departmental offices). Unless an earlier date is specified by the instructor, grades of 'I' must be made up as follows: for Semester I, by mid-semester of Semester II; for Semester II, by the first day of the following semester. Extensions beyond these dates for any period of time up to but no more than one year from the end of the semester in which the course left incomplete was taken may be granted by the instructor who will indicate this in writing to the Registrar.

   b. A course not completed by the designated time will be assigned a grade of NC unless the instructor indicates that sufficient work has been completed to justify course credit by submitting, as appropriate, a grade change from I to A, B, C, or S. A grade of NC assigned in accordance with the procedures may be changed subsequently, but no later than one calendar year after the end of the semester in which the course was taken.

   Except in special circumstances, students cannot allow grades of NC to remain on their records. The circumstances include the explicit written permission of the Director of Graduate Studies.

4. The warning will ordinarily include a statement of the reasons for the warning, and of the department's expectations of the student, which should give her/him some idea of what to do to get back up to proper standards in order not to be notified and terminated.
5. A student may be removed from warning status at any time during the warning period; he/she should be informed if this does occur. If at the end of a warning period the faculty still feels unable to reach a decision, they may extend the warning period for another semester. By the end of the second period, the student must either be notified or removed from warning status.

6. In view of this warning system, students who have not been issued warnings by the end of their second year may feel reasonably assured that they may remain in the program and get their doctorate, provided they fulfill the other departmental requirements in due course.

7. A student who is put on warning is expected to do special work aimed at removing his or her deficiencies, with the assistance of some department faculty member. The program of special work will be planned by the student and the faculty member working together. However, the ultimate decision on whether the student regains good standing and is not dismissed from the program will rest with the department as a whole.

**Rules Regulating the Evaluation of Graduate Students**

1. All graduate students will be graded in courses on a Satisfactory/No Credit basis only, but students will receive grades on term papers. Each graduate student in a course will receive a brief written evaluation of his/her work in the course, a copy of which will be kept on file in the department.

2. The department will meet to conduct a general evaluation of graduate students during the spring semester of each year. Following the meeting, each student will receive a letter reflecting the overall sentiment of the department: good at this, need to work on that, etc. Students toward the beginning of the program will generally receive more detailed letters, as they have the most need for “global” feedback. Especially for more advanced students, the letter will often be very brief; but in all cases, it will provide a mechanism for expressing concerns—or special praise—when warranted.

3. Although the whole faculty will participate in the evaluation of students, letters will be written by individual faculty, who will endeavor to transmit the collective opinion. For first-year students, letters will come from the two teachers of the proseminar. For second-year students, they will come from the DGS. And for more advanced students, they will come from students’ advisors.

**Financial Support for Advanced Graduate Students**

1. Financial aid recommendations for students who have exhausted initial departmental support commitments are based chiefly on the following factors: (i) the amount of total support thus far received (the department tries to equalize support for students who are in good standing); (ii) qualifications for the available positions (e.g., teaching ability, proctorship eligibility); and (iii) progress toward the degree.

2. The department will make decisions concerning financial aid as early as the University's budgetary process permits, and individual students will normally be informed before the end of the second semester.
3. Decisions concerning financial aid are made by a committee consisting of the Chair and the Director of Graduate Studies.

**Department Support of Job Applications**

Only students who have achieved doctoral candidacy will receive Departmental support for regular job applications (as distinguished from applications for part-time, temporary positions at nearby colleges).

**Appeals**

Decisions of Department officers may be appealed, through the Chairman, to the Department as a whole.