

BROWN UNIVERSITY PHILOSOPHY DEPARTMENT

GRADUATE STUDENT HANDBOOK, 2018

Goals of the Ph.D. Program

Although people who have earned Ph.D.s in Philosophy sometimes go on to careers in other fields, such as law and computer science, the course of studies leading to a Ph.D. is designed to train students for careers as professors of Philosophy, engaged in teaching and research. Students obtain a broad familiarity with the main branches of philosophy, learn how to do research that focuses on specialized topics at the frontier of the discipline, and acquire teaching skills that equip them for future work in the classroom.

Admission to the Ph.D. Program

An application for admission should include a transcript from the applicant's undergraduate institution, GRE scores, three letters of recommendation, and a writing sample. Where applicable, the application should include TOEFL scores. The procedures for applying are described at the website of the Graduate School.

Requirements for the Master of Arts Degree

In addition to its Ph.D. program, the Philosophy Department maintains a small, free-standing MA program, designed to provide support for Brown undergraduates who require additional training in Philosophy in order to move on to the more advanced graduate studies in Philosophy or other fields.

The requirements for the MA are completion of eight courses or completion of six courses and a thesis. (It is optional whether a student pursues the first or the second of these two plans. The decision should be made in consultation with the Director of Graduate Studies (hereafter DGS) at the beginning of a student's course work.) The courses should generally include one in Epistemology, one in Ethics, one in History of Philosophy, and one in Metaphysics, though the DGS may agree to waive one or more of these requirements if the student has taken appropriate courses as an undergraduate. (Such a waiver would not reduce the total number of courses that the student must complete.)

Mentor Requirement for Ph.D. students

Each first or second year student should choose a faculty mentor. When a choice is not made within the first three weeks of the fall semesters, the student will be assigned a mentor by the DGS. Second year students may retain their first year mentors or choose new ones.

Students should meet with faculty mentors at least twice each semester, and be given advice about such things as papers for courses, publication efforts, standing in the program, progress toward degree, career objectives, and

opportunities in the profession. Students should supply their mentors with information concerning such topics as conference invitations, grades on papers, and incompletes.

Course Requirements for the Ph.D.

To receive a Ph.D. degree in philosophy from Brown, a student must successfully complete a number of courses:

1. **Proseminar.** All students are required to register for the Proseminar in both the first and second semesters 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. Work for the Proseminar includes discussion, reports, and short papers, but does not normally include a term paper. Accordingly, each semester of the seminar counts as a half course.

2. **Twelve additional courses**, of which at least eight must be seminars.

Seminars are courses numbered above 2000 or designated as seminars by the instructors. It is understood that a course will be designated as a seminar only when it involves substantial discussion of philosophy among several people. (In order to use a course at the level of 2000 or below towards satisfaction of the seminar requirements, a student must obtain a signed memo from the instructor to the Director of Graduate Studies, designating that course as a seminar. That memo is to be placed in the student's file.)

The courses must fulfill the Distribution Requirement, which is described in the next section.

The Proseminar does not count towards this course requirement. Nor do any of the Literature Review, the Paper Workshop, and the Dissertation Workshop.

Up to two courses offered by other departments may be counted toward the twelve required courses, provided they clearly contribute to the student's philosophical progress and they are approved in advance by the Director of Graduate Studies.

3. **Literature Review and Paper Workshop** in the third year.

A student should provisionally select a faculty adviser for the third year review by the end of the second semester of the second year.

In the first semester of the third year, a student must enroll in an independent study course (PHIL 2980 Research in Philosophy). 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.

The director of a student's literature review should explain the expectations

for third year students in detail, and should monitor and provide assessments of progress toward goals throughout the year. More generally, the director of the review should act as the student's principal academic adviser.

The director should also make concrete recommendations about publishing the

Third Year Paper and moving from the Paper to a Prospectus.

Paper Workshop: In the second semester of the third year, a student must enroll in a "paper workshop" (PHIL 2700 Third Year Workshop) designed to facilitate the writing of a substantial paper. The paper should have the depth and ambition that are characteristic of journal articles. Also, since the maximum length of a journal article is normally 10,000 words, the paper should be approximately 8,000-10,000 words in length, exclusive of bibliography. It 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.

The director of a student's third year review should attend sessions of the Paper Workshop in which the student is presenting work.

4. **Dissertation Workshop.**

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. (Unenrolled ABD's are welcome and are encouraged to come.)

A student's dissertation adviser should attend sessions of the Paper Workshop in which the student is presenting work.

Distribution Requirements.

The twelve required courses must include the following.

1. **Philosophy of Language/Mind/Science:** One course in philosophy of language, philosophy of mind or philosophy of science.
2. **Ethics:** Two courses in ethics or political philosophy, at least one of which must be in ethics.
3. **Epistemology:** One course in epistemology.

4. **Metaphysics:** One course in metaphysics.
5. **History of Philosophy:** Three courses in history of philosophy, at least one of which shall be in ancient philosophy and at least one of which shall be in modern philosophy up through Kant. The third course may be in any period of philosophy. (A course focused on work done in the last 100 years may satisfy this part of the requirement, provided that it approaches that work from an historical prospective, and that work was not done within the last 50 years.)

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 director of graduate studies in writing. No course or seminar may be counted twice toward the fulfillment of these requirements. All courses must be at the four-digit level (PHIL1000 or above). Seminars count as “courses.” If a course below 2000 is to be taken for credit, it must require as much work of graduate students as would be expected in a seminar, and also work that is as high in quality. This will generally entail more assignments for the graduate students taking the course than the undergraduates.

Logic: In addition to successfully completing courses in the forementioned areas, students must demonstrate a competency in Logic. A competency involves, at minimum, full mastery of the material covered in PHIL 0540. This competency may be demonstrated in several ways: by passing a course in logic at the 1000 level or above; by taking a written exam on the material in PHIL 0540 and passing with an “A”; by enrolling in an independent study course with the instructor of PHIL 0540 and doing all the work required for the course at an “A” level; and by presenting evidence of having taken a course equivalent to 0540 as an undergraduate. (The independent study option is included because PHIL 0540 is not a 1000 level course, and therefore cannot be taken for credit by graduate students.)

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. 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, 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.)

Language Requirements for the Ph.D.

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

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 may also consider earlier work, and the student's record of completing courses. 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.

Students should submit both their literature reviews and their third year papers to the Director of Graduate Studies by June 1 in their third year. The faculty committee evaluating a student's work will make every effort to complete their evaluation within a month.

The faculty committee will normally consist of the person who supervised the third year paper workshop and a person whose areas of specialization include the area of the third year paper.

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.

Rules Governing the Writing of Dissertations

1. Admission to Candidacy

Before the end of 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 at least three members. When appropriate, the Committee may include members from outside the Department, but at least one member of the Committee must be a voting member of the Brown Philosophy Department. An outside member of the Committee might be a member of the Brown Faculty working in an area of scholarship related to the dissertation topic, but could also be a scholar from another institution. Students are encouraged to call upon and make use of the expertise of scholars outside the Department.

(c) **Structure of the dissertation.** A dissertation may be either a monograph that explores a single topic in depth, or three independent papers on different but related topics.

(c) **Prospectus.** The prospectus will outline the dissertation project. It will include of an introduction describing the topic or topics of the dissertation, and will also include descriptions of the major parts. It should also include a bibliography. It should be 5,000-6,000 words in length, exclusive of bibliography. 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.

A dissertation should resemble published works in quality and ambition. A prospectus should give evidence that the author has these ends in view.

(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. Any such change should occur early enough for the student to satisfy the prospectus requirement prior to the end of seventh semester, though it is possible to petition for an extension.

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 student must petition the Department for permission to make such a change. A new prospectus must be submitted and approved. If the student wishes to change the Principal Advisor, that too will require a petition.

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.

Students writing dissertations will meet with their full committees (insofar as possible – there may be insuperable scheduling difficulties) once a year. Students will present new work at these meetings

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 Examination.** 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. The candidate will then be examined orally by the Committee. Questions may concern the material covered in the oral presentation, and also any part or aspect of the dissertation itself.

(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.

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 **April 15** of the 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 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 Third Year Review, the work of all students will normally be evaluated at the end of their sixth semester: the basis for the evaluation will include the student's record and overall performance, including how much of the formal course work has been completed, and the quality of the student's literature review and third year paper.

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 of termination 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.

Papers will be graded in timely fashion – normally within one month of being received. In addition to providing a letter grade and written comments, faculty will provide advice about the publishability of papers.

When a student submits a draft of a dissertation chapter to the principal adviser, the adviser will make every effort to provide comments within a month. Further, every semester the principal adviser will contact the other committee members to assess the student's progress.

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.

Teaching Responsibilities

In the first and fifth years, students are on Fellowships that do not entail teaching obligations, but normally students are required to teach for three years as part of their training for the professoriate. In the second through fourth years, they are either Teaching Assistants (TAs) or Teaching Fellows (TFs). TAs are assigned to courses taught by professors, and are responsible for some or all of the grading for those courses. They may also be in charge of small discussion sections. TFs are fully responsible for their own courses. In all cases, teaching responsibilities will require no more than 20 hours per week.

In accordance with the rules of the Graduate School, students in the six-year Open Graduate Education MA program may substitute teaching in their sixth year for teaching in the second, third or fourth year. Students who continue on for a sixth year but who are not in the OGE program will serve as TAs or TFs in that year.

As soon as classes begin in the fall, there will be a meeting of second year students hosted by a faculty member and advanced students who are experienced TAs. The hosts of the meeting will answer questions about teaching and provide advice.

The instructors of courses to which TAs have been assigned will hold meetings at the beginning of the semester to explain their expectations, and the work of TAs will be closely supervised by the instructors. The classes of TFs will be visited by Department representatives. In all cases, students will receive written evaluations of their work and the evaluations will be placed in their dossiers.

Students who wish to be TFs must submit applications to the Director of Graduate Studies. Each application should include a detailed syllabus for the proposed course. Applications will be evaluated by the DGS and the Assistant Chair of the Department.

Students who are scheduled to serve as TAs may submit preferences for serving in specific courses to the Department Administrator. The Department will be guided by such preferences insofar as possible, but will sometimes have to override preferences in order to accommodate the populations of specific courses.

At the beginning of the first year in which they are teaching, students should attend a New TA Orientation Session at the Sheridan Center. Students will also receive guidance from the instructors of the courses in which they are assisting. In some cases, students may be asked to attend additional workshops at the Sheridan Center, or may be referred to English for International TAs Program.

Support for Students with Special Needs

Please inform the Director of Graduate Studies if you have a disability or other condition that might require accommodation or modification of any of the forgoing requirements or procedures. Students requiring accommodation within particular courses should speak with the instructors, either after class or during office hours. As part of this process, a student should be registered with Student and Employee Accessibility Services (SEAS) and provide the Director of Graduate Studies and/or the instructors of courses with an academic accommodation letter from them. For more information, contact SEAS at (401) 863-9588 or SEAS@brown.edu.

Financial Support for Advanced Graduate Students

1. The University guarantees support for all Ph.D. students in good standing for the first five years of graduate study (though students who take leaves of absence lose their eligibility for support for the period of their leave).
2. The Graduate School has historically provided support for sixth year students in good standing, but these dispensations depend upon the availability of funds, and there is therefore no guarantee that sixth year support will be provided. In any case, Graduate School support for sixth year students is contingent upon recommendations from the Department. Departmental decisions 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.
3. The Department will make decisions concerning financial aid for sixth year students as early as the University's budgetary process permits, and will notify students of its decisions prior to the beginning of the second semester of the fifth year.
4. Decisions concerning financial aid are made by a committee consisting of the Chair and the Director of Graduate Studies.
5. The Graduate School does not provide fellowship support for seventh year students, though it may agree to waive tuition for them.

Department Support of Job Applications

A member of the faculty is assigned to provide support with job applications. This support includes advice about various items that are included in job applications, including C.V.s, writing samples, and descriptions of research goals. In addition, students receive training to prepare them for the various stages of the interview process, and a certain amount of financial support for mailing dossiers, traveling to conventions for interviews, and so on.

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 Chair, to the Department as a whole.