

University of Rochester Graduate Programs in Philosophy

Ph.D. Program in Philosophy

Program Objectives and Learning Outcomes

Objective 1: The program will prepare students to carry out independent, creative research and scholarship in philosophy.

1a. Core knowledge and methods: Students will demonstrate understanding and knowledge of foundational areas of philosophy as well as competence in the methodologies of inquiry and scholarship in those areas.

1b. Specialized knowledge and methods: Students will demonstrate comprehensive, in depth understanding, knowledge, and capacity for original inquiry and scholarship in primary and secondary areas of specialization chosen by the student in consultation with an advisor.

1c. Critical thinking, research, and scholarship: Students will demonstrate ability to critically analyze works in the field, develop and skillfully carry out a research project, and prepare manuscripts for public presentation and publication.

Objective 2: The program will prepare students to be successful as professionals in the field of philosophy.

2a. Written and oral communication: Students will demonstrate skill in presenting research and arguments in clear, well-organized papers, both in print and orally in front of an audience.

2b. Teaching: Students will present well organized lectures, lead discussion, and participate in developing and evaluating assignments that promote student learning.

2c. Professional orientation: Students will demonstrate professionalism in their scholarly, instructional, service, and collegial activities and in their preparation to successfully interview for academic employment.

Direct Assessment Methods for Ph.D. Program in Philosophy

1. Our five-year Ph.D. program consists in three tiers, Foundations, Advanced Requirements, and Dissertation. Students are evaluated at the end of every semester in which they are enrolled. The failure to maintain a GPA between 3.0 and 4.0 or the failure to make satisfactory progress toward meeting our requirements is likely to result in the loss of fellowship support, termination, or both.
2. Each student is expected to satisfy the Foundations requirement (three specified courses covering the history of philosophy and logic, and three other 400 level courses) by the middle of the second year in the program. The director of the graduate program (DGP) reviews the student's file at this time and reports to the rest of the faculty whether the student has satisfied the Foundations requirement. A student who is falling behind receives a warning letter initially and would lose financial support if the problem persists.
3. In order to satisfy the Advanced Requirements, a student must take an additional 6 graduate level courses, including two seminars in each of their chosen primary and secondary areas of concentration and Philosophy 560, the Writing Seminar. The Writing Seminar provides a semester long experience in preparing a paper to a professional level, presenting it to a live professional audience, and taking questions. A student must also pass comprehensive exams in his or her primary and secondary areas. A student must take at least one comprehensive exam by the end of the third year in the program. A committee of two faculty members writes, administers, and evaluates the results of the comprehensive examination. The DGP reviews a student's record at this time and reports to the rest of the faculty whether the student is still on track to complete the Advanced Requirements.
4. By the end of the first semester of their fourth year, a student should have taken both comprehensive examinations and completed the Writing Seminar (PHL 560) and satisfied the teaching requirement. This may be done in either of two ways, by teaching College Writing or by taking Philosophy 581, Supervised Instruction, in which the student gives lectures in a course under the supervision of a faculty member. The departmental director of graduate teaching evaluates the student's teaching and submits a written report to the department. The DGP reviews the student's file and reports to the department whether the student has met these requirements.
5. By the end of their fourth year in the program, the student should have passed the Qualifying Examination. In order to do this, the student must produce a thesis proposal consisting of a description of the thesis project and a bibliography that is approved by his/her Dissertation committee and then petition the department to be admitted to candidacy for a Ph.D. At this time, the student will have satisfied the department's requirements for the M.A.
6. During the fifth year, the student works closely with his or her committee in hopes of completing and defending their dissertation by the end of the year. The student's thesis advisor reports on the student's progress at the end of each semester.

7. After the fifth year, a student who has not yet completed the dissertation continues to work with their committee and their advisor reports on their progress at the end of each year.
8. At the end of every semester during the first five years in residence there is a departmental meeting in which the DGP summarizes, and the faculty discusses, the progress of every student in the program. The DGP writes a letter to every student summarizing the department's concerns (if any) about the student's progress as well as summarizing the student's progress toward meeting program requirements. Individual instructors also write evaluations of every student that they have taught or directed as a teaching assistant during the semester. These evaluations are sent to the student and his/her advisor together with the DGP's letter.
9. At the beginning of the fall semester, the DGP reviews the academic files of first through fifth year students and meets with each class individually to discuss the department's expectations for them. If a student has not yet met the requirements for a student in their year, the DGP also meets with them individually to discuss the importance of timely completion of program requirements.
10. Ph.D. Thesis and Final Oral Examination: the thesis committee reviews the dissertation and approves it for defense. The thesis examination has two parts, a public lecture and a closed oral examination. First the student gives a public lecture and accepts questions from the audience for about an hour; this is followed by a closed examination of the student by the committee members, who then vote on whether the student has passed the examination and whether the thesis should be revised in any way.
11. Mock Interviews: A student who reaches the stage of conducting a search for an academic position is guided in preparing a *curriculum vitae*, documentation of teaching experience and competence, and a writing sample. As the time of interviews approaches, students participate in a mock interview and are provided with an oral assessment and guidance for improvement.

Indirect Assessment Methods for Ph.D. Program in Philosophy

1. Students and recent graduates' success in placing papers on refereed programs and in journals is noted.
2. Job placement data for recent graduates is kept.

Program assessment data review plan (frequency of implementation)

1. Students are reviewed at the end of each semester in which they are in residence by the DGP and faculty in a departmental meeting.
2. The DGP also reviews every students' academic history at the beginning of the fall semester and meets individually with any student who is falling behind.

M.A. Program in Philosophy

Program Objectives and Learning Outcomes

Students who suspend their work toward a Ph.D. may be eligible to receive a terminal M.A. degree. In rare instances, we admit for terminal M.A. study an applicant whose special circumstances make the M.A. degree desirable. In all of these cases, students present themselves as having objectives of their own – often in the form of personal satisfaction. We do not present the M.A. program as having inherent objectives of its own.

The subset of Ph.D. program learning outcomes that pertain to terminal M.A. study are:

1a. Core knowledge and methods: Students will demonstrate understanding and knowledge of foundational areas of philosophy as well as competence in the methodologies of inquiry and scholarship in those areas.

1c. Critical thinking and scholarship: Students will demonstrate ability to develop philosophical ideas and critically analyze works in the field.

2a. Written and oral communication: Students will demonstrate skill in philosophical analysis and argument in discussion and in clear, well-organized essays.

Direct Assessment Methods for M.A.

1. The vast majority of students admitted to our graduate program are prospective Ph.D. candidates. As mentioned in the section on direct methods of assessment of the Ph.D. program, these students receive the M.A. upon passing the qualifying examination and being formally admitted to candidacy for the Ph.D. For such students, the assessment methods for the M.A. are identical to the ones for the Ph.D. (see above for details).

2. Students who leave the program after the two years of study and passing the secondary area examination are granted a terminal M.A. These students will have been evaluated in the same way as the Ph.D. students up to the point at which they decide (or are encouraged by us) to leave.

3. Very rarely (approximately once a decade) a student is admitted as a terminal M.A. candidate. Such a student will also be required to meet our foundations requirements (see above) and then either take a comprehensive examination that is comparable to a secondary area examination for a Ph.D. student or write a short dissertation under the supervision of a faculty committee. As long as the student is in residence, their progress toward the M.A. will be evaluated by the DGP and reported to the faculty at the end of each semester.