



Kent State University

Philosophy MA Program Handbook

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1. Program Description

The Master of Arts degree program in philosophy at Kent State University offers intensive, in-depth study of philosophy, with particular attention to the diversity and plurality of philosophical methods, perspectives, and traditions, as well as their relation to other disciplines. Most of our graduate students go on to pursue doctoral degrees in philosophy, while others are seeking a terminal Master's in philosophy to supplement and enhance their careers or their work in other disciplines.

The MA curriculum develops both the breadth and depth of our students' philosophical knowledge, offering a research-forward focus that provides superior preparation for doctoral work in philosophy. We provide end-to-end mentoring, which includes pedagogical training, preparation for a career in academic philosophy, and extensive assistance with applications and placement into PhD programs. Students receive a great deal of personalized attention from our faculty, who develop relationships with our graduates that extend beyond the program and into their careers in philosophy.

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2. Admission and Financial Aid

Applicants apply online by visiting the [Admissions Office Online Application site](#).

a. Admission Requirements

Applicants to the Graduate Program must submit the following with their application:

- three letters of recommendation
- statement of purpose
- writing sample
- undergraduate transcript(s) from all schools at which the applicant completed six or more credit hours
- TOEFL scores for international applicants

The GRE is not required for admission to the Graduate Program.

Documents must be submitted to the Graduate School, through the process details on the Admissions Office website. The application is not complete until the Graduate School has received and processed all required application materials.

The department has two different application deadlines, depending on whether the applicant wishes to apply for financial aid.

To apply for financial aid: all application materials must be received and processed by the Graduate School by **February 1** for matriculation the following Fall.

To apply without requesting financial aid: all application materials must be received and processed by the Graduate School about 8 weeks prior to the semester of matriculation: **July 12** for Fall, and **November 29** for Spring.

Applicants who do not have an undergraduate philosophy major or minor or at least 18 semester hours (or the equivalent) in philosophy, or who have an overall GPA below 3.0 (on a 4 point scale), should consult the [graduate coordinator](#) before submitting their application.

b. Conditional Admission

Students who do not meet all of the requirements for admission may be admitted conditionally. The department might assign this status, for example, to applicants who have 15 undergraduate hours of philosophy instead of the required 18. In all cases of conditional admission, the department will specify the condition(s) of admission in writing: in this example, a student might be required to earn a B or better in a 3-hour undergraduate philosophy course during the first semester in the graduate program. The condition(s) must be satisfied in addition to the usual requirements for the MA degree. Students who do not satisfy the condition(s) placed on their admission are subject to dismissal.

c. Non-degree or Guest Student

Applicants who are not prepared to apply to the program or who otherwise wish to take graduate courses without enrolling in the graduate program may apply to be non-degree or guest students. Non-degree and guest students must meet certain eligibility requirements and may take a limited number of graduate courses without enrolling in a degree program. Should they go on to apply to and enroll in the graduate program, some or all graduate coursework taken as a non-degree or guest student may count toward the MA degree with the Dean's approval.

For more information on the non-degree or guest application, please visit the Kent State University [admissions website](#).

d. Transfer of Credits

Up to 12 hours of graduate work completed at another university may be accepted toward the philosophy MA degree, with departmental approval. Students who have credits they wish to transfer should consult the [graduate coordinator](#) about the transferability of their credits and must file the [Transfer of Graduate Credit](#) form with the Graduate School.

e. BA/MA Program

Kent State undergraduates who meet the requirements may apply early to the graduate program and qualify to count up to 12 hours of graduate coursework toward both the BA and MA degrees. Interested students should consult the [Graduate Catalog](#) or the [graduate coordinator](#).

f. Financial Aid

A limited number of teaching assistantships (with competitive stipends) and tuition/fee waivers are available for graduate students. Graduate assistantships are awarded on the basis of merit primarily to incoming students, though occasionally the department will fund a continuing student who has

performed with distinction in the first half of the program. Applicants seeking a Graduate Assistantship must submit a completed [Application for Graduate Assistantship](#) form prior to receiving an appointment.

Information about the duties and requirements of assistantships is in the [Graduate Assistantship](#) section below.

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3. Program Requirements

a. Course Requirements

The M.A. degree in Philosophy requires 36 semester hours beyond the baccalaureate degree. The degree requirements include:

- Graduate Seminars: 6 hours
- Logic Requirement: 3 hours
- Elective Coursework: 15 hours
- Culminating Experience (Thesis or Non-thesis Project): 6 hours
- Proseminar: 6 hours

Graduate Seminars

In support of the program's emphasis on pluralism, two Graduate Seminars (PHIL 60191) cultivate the skills required for professional-quality research in diverse areas of philosophical specialization. Taken in the second and third semesters in residence, the graduate seminars are required of all graduate students in the program and offer an opportunity for intensive primary-source reading and critical examination of significant philosophical figures, issues and traditions.

Students sometimes inquire whether they *must* take the Graduate Seminar in the second and third semesters: sometimes the topic is not what they regard as their area of interest, or another course seems more appealing. **Students must take the Graduate Seminars offered in their second and third semesters:** this course is taught by faculty sharing their areas of expertise and current research. Even if the topic initially seems unappealing, the course will offer superior content and instruction, and students will acquire knowledge and competencies beyond a more narrow range of interests. Such competencies are often professionally and academically useful. If students wish to take an additional Graduate Seminar beyond the two required, they may do so as part of their elective coursework.

Logic Requirement

To support their work in the MA program, students take PHIL 51038 Intermediate Logic in their first semester in the program. Students who enter the program having already taken a course in symbolic logic comparable to PHIL 51038 (i.e. a second course with material that is more advanced than what

is typically found in an introductory formal logic course) may request that the graduate coordinator excuse them from this requirement, and if such a request is granted, the student will make up the 3 hours with an additional elective course.

Elective Coursework

Students in our MA program have a unique opportunity to design an individualized concentration consisting of five of our [graduate PHIL courses](#). This allows them to take full advantage of the extremely wide range of specializations represented by our faculty, many of which are interdisciplinary or cross traditional methodological boundaries within the discipline of philosophy. Our program is thus an excellent fit for students whose own interests span multiple areas and/or methodologies, but it also allows students to design a more traditional concentration in a particular subfield of philosophy. Students work with a faculty advisory group (AG) throughout their time in the program in order to design a concentration that reflects their interests, addresses any gaps in their prior philosophical training, and leaves them extremely well prepared to enter a doctoral program.

With approval of their AG and the graduate coordinator, students may take one graduate course (no more than 3 hours) in a discipline outside philosophy if the course clearly contributes to their degree program. [University policy](#) prohibits graduate foreign language reading courses from counting towards degree requirements in any program and from counting toward a graduate appointee's full-time status.

Culminating Experience

Graduate students ordinarily complete the requirements for the MA in philosophy by writing a thesis. The thesis offers an opportunity for graduate students to work closely with a faculty member and a faculty advisory group in order to explore a topic of the student's choice. In certain cases, students choose instead to pursue one of our non-thesis project options. In either case, proposals for a culminating experience may be made only after a student has met the following requirements: completion of, or present good standing in, six hours of elective coursework and one section each of PHIL 60191 and PHIL 51038. More information about the thesis and non-thesis options are available in the [Thesis and Culminating Experience](#) section below.

Proseminar

The Proseminar (PHIL 69101) is a three-hour, year-long course that meets weekly to provide professional training to our graduate students. Topics covered include preparing strong applications to doctoral programs, applying to and presenting at academic conferences, and applying for grants and fellowships. In addition, students write and revise a paper which is appropriate for use as a conference submission or a writing sample for PhD applications. A third important focus of the Proseminar is the planning and organization of the annual May 4th [graduate student conference](#), which the graduate students organize, including everything from the initial call for papers through refereeing submissions to hosting the conference. Students register for this course during each of their two Fall semesters in the program.

b. Two-year Plan

YEAR ONE	
<u>Fall</u>	<u>Spring</u>
51038 Intermediate Logic (3 hours) <i>Elective</i> (3) 69101 Proseminar (3)	60191 Graduate Seminar (3) <i>Electives</i> (6)
TOTAL Hours = 9	TOTAL Hours = 9
YEAR TWO	
<u>Fall</u>	<u>Spring</u>
60191 Graduate Seminar (3) 69199 Thesis I (4) or 69998 Research (3) or <i>Elective</i> (3) 69101 Proseminar (3)	<i>Electives</i> (6) 69199 Thesis I (2) or 69998 Research (3) or 60191 Graduate Seminar (3)
TOTAL Hours = 10 (Non-thesis students = 9)	TOTAL Hours = 8 (Non-thesis students = 9)

TOTAL HOURS: 36

c. Summer

The graduate program does not operate during the summer. No graduate courses are offered, no thesis defenses are scheduled, and no departmental graduate appointments are available. The department encourages students who are beginning their thesis to work with their directors and to take advantage of the time to do research and start writing during summer.

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4. Thesis and Culminating Experience

The philosophy MA requires 6 credit hours of Thesis I (PHIL 69199); for those pursuing a non-thesis project other than the coursework/paper option, the requirement is 6 credit hours of Research (PHIL 69998). These 6 hours must be taken over two consecutive semesters. In the first semester, usually Fall, thesis students register for four hours of Thesis I; in the second semester, they register for two hours of Thesis I. All sections of Thesis I will receive a grade of IP until the thesis is completed.

The purpose of Thesis II (PHIL 69299), which is not a program requirement, is to provide a course for students to take who need more time to finish their thesis after all program requirements except the thesis have been met. No one may register for Thesis II until after completing the required 6 hours and two semesters of Thesis I. Once students have completed 6 hours of Thesis I, they must register for two hours of Thesis II for each Fall and Spring semester until they complete all degree requirements, including the thesis defense and the uploading of the final draft. All sections of Thesis II will receive a grade of IP until the thesis is completed.

Students pursuing a non-thesis project are not required to register for Research each semester after completing their initial 6 hours, but they must register for one hour of Research in the semester in which they expect to complete the requirements for the MA degree.

a. Topic Proposal

The thesis process begins with the (departmental) [Thesis/Project Topic Proposal](#) form, which the graduate coordinator distributes to first-year students in March (or as needed) and uses to assign advisory groups and directors. The student and director then work together to prepare the (departmental) [Thesis Prospectus and Bibliography](#) form. The advisory group generally reviews a draft of this form with the student at the initial AG meeting of the first semester of Thesis I. If the draft is not ready for final approval at that time, the student revises it and makes a final draft available for the director to sign as soon as possible after the meeting. Students will also need to turn in the (college) [Notification of Approved Thesis Topic](#) form. The heart of this form is the brief thesis abstract copied from the Thesis Prospectus form. This form should be signed by the entire advisory group at an AG meeting in the first semester of Thesis I.

b. Timeline

Students work with their directors to establish a detailed schedule for the thesis or project. But a healthy plan is to have at least two-thirds of the text(s) drafted by the end of the first semester of Thesis I (or Research) and to complete a first draft by the start of the second semester of Thesis I (or Research).

Part of the reason for requiring students to take 4 hours of Thesis I in the first semester of the project is to allow time to get the bulk of the writing done. To graduate at the end of the second semester of Thesis I, students will not have the entire second semester to write: the deadlines for defending and turning in the thesis begin around week 11 of the semester, which means that, in order to defend in time to graduate in that semester, students must have an approved, final draft completed around week 8, or halfway through the semester.

c. Writing

Students must be sure to conform to the [university style guide](#), which governs theses and dissertations. It is easier to format the thesis correctly from the outset than to try to fix problems at the end. The thesis will ultimately be turned in to the college Office of Graduate Affairs in electronic format. Students might have only a few days between the defense and the deadline for turning in the thesis, and if it is not formatted correctly, the college office will not accept it. This issue could delay graduating on time.

d. Oral Defense

Students work with the director on drafts of chapters until both are satisfied with the written thesis. At that point, the director will approve the distribution of the thesis to readers. The director will select a reader from a discipline outside philosophy and will work with the graduate coordinator to arrange a date for the oral defense of the thesis.

Students send electronic copies of the thesis to all four readers, who will have at least 10 calendar days before the defense to [evaluate the thesis](#) and fill out the [Thesis Evaluation Form](#). They also send a copy to the Graduate Coordinator. Unless readers fail the thesis, the oral defense will proceed as scheduled, following [departmental procedures](#). Upon passing the oral defense and having the thesis accepted by the college, the thesis requirement is satisfied. Students who have completed all other program requirements have at that point earned the MA degree.

Ordinarily the college imposes a deadline near the 11th week of each semester for the oral defense for students intending to graduate at the end of that semester. During spring semester, this deadline typically falls in the first week of April (and sometimes during spring break, when no defenses are scheduled). Students may continue to defend after this deadline until the end of spring semester, but they will have to graduate in August. The department does not generally permit thesis defenses during summer.

Following the oral defense, students will have a few days to a few weeks to prepare and submit the final draft to the college office. They will submit the draft electronically, except for the signature pages, templates for which can be found in the [university style guide](#). Note that students are responsible for securing their director's signature on the Signature Approval Form (student-prepared from the template in the Style Guide; two signed copies required) in time to meet the college deadline, or by the end of the semester in order to graduate in the following semester (this step could require additional planning during summer). After the director has signed the form, students should submit the pages to the department secretary for the chair's and dean's signatures.

[A list of recent MA theses](#) is available on the department website.

e. Non-thesis options

In lieu of a thesis, students have the following non-thesis options for their culminating experience. Students considering pursuing one of these options should speak with the Graduate Coordinator and their Advisory Group as soon as possible to discuss their plans. Since students decide to

pursue, or are moved to, non-thesis options at various points in the program, no firm deadlines exist for intermediate stages of the project as they do for the thesis option. The following guidelines are meant to clarify the process as much as possible given the different timelines students might be working with. In all cases, work on the culminating experience should begin in earnest in a student's third semester in the program for full-time students, or the equivalent for part-time students.

1. **Coursework and Paper Option:** The requirements for an MA in philosophy may be satisfied by completing (with a course grade of "B" or better) an additional 6 hours of coursework (3 hours of which must consist of PHIL 60191 Graduate Seminar in the student's fourth semester in residence) and a 20-25 page paper on a topic approved by the student's Advisory Group.

Guidelines: A student pursuing this option must meet with the Advisory Group and propose a topic for the paper. There is no formal paperwork associated with this process, but the topic must be discussed with and approved by the Advisory Group. The student may not use any paper that was previously written for a class (at KSU or elsewhere), conference, application, or any other scholarly purpose to fulfill this requirement. While students are free to write on a topic they have addressed elsewhere, the paper must consist of new material. After the topic is approved, the student and the Advisory Group agree to a plan for the completion of the work by the deadline.

Students should plan to submit one or more partial or full drafts of the paper well in advance of the deadline, as there is no time for further revision after that point. Since there is no director for this project as there is for a thesis, all Advisory Group members should be prepared to provide feedback on drafts of the paper as appropriate; however, the volume and frequency of that feedback is not expected to be comparable to that provided during the thesis-writing process. The final draft of the paper must be submitted by the end of business on Monday of the last week of classes (week 15) of the semester in which the student plans to graduate; Advisory Group members should submit a brief assessment of the paper, including a judgment of 'Satisfactory' or 'Unsatisfactory', to the Graduate Coordinator by the following Monday.

Evaluation: No formal defense or discussion of the paper is required, though students may request one. Members of the Advisory Group assess the paper as either satisfactory or unsatisfactory, where a satisfactory paper is one that displays a level of philosophical argumentation skill and command of the relevant literature that is higher than what would be expected of a first-year graduate student. Advisory Group members who find the paper to be unsatisfactory are expected to explain the reasons for this assessment in writing; the assessment should be sent to the student with a copy to the Graduate Coordinator by the deadline listed above. If two out of three members of the Advisory Group judge the paper unsatisfactory, the Graduate Coordinator will read and assess the paper. If the Graduate Coordinator also judges the paper unsatisfactory, then it will be returned to the student for revision with all available comments, the student will be provided a new deadline, and the student's graduation will be postponed until the paper is judged to be satisfactory. If the Graduate Coordinator judges the paper satisfactory, then the student will have satisfied the culminating experience requirement.

2. **Project Option:** This option might be appropriate for students who wish to pursue substantial research that is not ideally presentable in a traditional thesis. Examples might include, but are not limited to, projects with substantial empirical content, aesthetic demonstrations, or applied projects in areas such as pedagogy, social work, or urban design.

Guidelines: Students should enroll in PHIL 69998 Research for six credit hours over two consecutive semesters (3 hours each). The details of the research project must be approved by the student's Advisory Group. Research projects are to be summarized in a written report of a length and scope suitable to the nature of the project; the student and the Advisory Group should agree on a basic outline of the contents of the report well in advance of the submission deadline. In addition to the report, the student will give a 30-minute presentation of the project to the Advisory Group and guests, followed by a 30-minute question and answer session. The report must be submitted, and the presentation must take place, by the end of business on Monday of the last week of classes (week 15) of the semester in which the student plans to graduate; Advisory Group members should submit a brief assessment of the project and presentation, including a judgment of 'Satisfactory' or 'Unsatisfactory', to the Graduate Coordinator by the following Monday.

Evaluation: Members of the Advisory Group assess the presentation and report as either satisfactory or unsatisfactory, where a satisfactory presentation is one that conveys the details of the project, including its goals, implementation, and outcomes or findings at a level of sophistication beyond what would be expected of a first-year graduate student. Both the presentation and the report should also demonstrate the relevance of the student's philosophical training to the project. Advisory Group members who find the implementation of the project, or the presentation or report, to be unsatisfactory are expected to explain the reasons for this assessment in writing; the assessment should be sent to the student with a copy to the Graduate Coordinator by the deadline listed above.

3. **Publication Research Option:** This option might be appropriate for students planning to pursue a PhD in a field other than philosophy, or in a subfield within philosophy, where articles in scholarly journals are the main form in which research is disseminated. Students pursuing this option will write two original substantial papers on topics approved by their Advisory Group, who will serve as editors and will provide the type of feedback that would typically be received through the blind review process at a scholarly journal.

Guidelines: Students should enroll in PHIL 69998 Research for six credit hours over two consecutive semesters (3 hours each). The topics of the two papers must be approved by the student's Advisory Group at the outset of the process. The student may not use any paper that was previously written for a class (at KSU or elsewhere), conference, application, or any other scholarly purpose to fulfill this requirement. While students are free to write on topics they have addressed elsewhere, the papers must consist of new material. The papers should be of a length that would be appropriate for submission to journals in the student's area of interest. After the topics are approved, the student and the Advisory Group agree to a plan for the completion of the work by the deadline.

Students should plan to submit their first drafts of the papers well in advance of the deadline, to give them sufficient time for a first, and possibly second, round of revision. The student is required to submit at least one draft of each paper to the Advisory Group, who will provide

appropriate feedback as described above. The student will then “revise and resubmit” the papers to the Advisory Group, who will either provide a second round of feedback or determine that the papers are ready to be publicly presented. The Advisory Group should notify the Graduate Coordinator as soon as each paper has been judged to be satisfactory, so that a presentation may be scheduled. There is no limit to the number of rounds of revision that the papers may undergo, but the Advisory Group should notify the Graduate Coordinator if the student has not submitted satisfactory versions of both papers by two weeks before the deadline for the presentations.

One paper is to be presented before the student’s Advisory Group; the other presentation will be open to guests as well. In both cases, the student will present the paper and will then take questions from the audience for 30 minutes. Both presentations must take place by the end of business on Monday of the last week of classes (week 15) of the semester in which the student plans to graduate; Advisory Group members should submit a brief assessment of the papers and presentations, including a judgment of ‘Satisfactory’ or ‘Unsatisfactory’, to the Graduate Coordinator by the following Monday. A paper which is accepted for publication at a peer-reviewed scholarly journal will be considered ‘Satisfactory’ and will not be required to undergo further review within the department. However, the student will still be required to formally present the paper and take questions.

Evaluation: Members of the Advisory Group assess the papers as either satisfactory or unsatisfactory, where a satisfactory paper is one that displays a level of philosophical argumentation skill and command of the relevant literature that would make the paper appropriate to submit to a fairly selective journal in the student’s area of interest. A satisfactory presentation is one in which the student clearly explains the thesis and arguments contained in the paper and demonstrates a command of the relevant material through responses to questions posed by members of the audience. Advisory Group members who find either paper or presentation to be unsatisfactory are expected to explain the reasons for this assessment in writing; the assessment should be sent to the student with a copy to the Graduate Coordinator by the deadline listed above.

The departmental expectation is that students who intend to pursue a PhD in philosophy will write a thesis, though some might pursue the Project or Publication Research Options. Students who wish to pursue a non-thesis option should consult with the [graduate coordinator](#) early in their second semester of the first year in the program, when the graduate coordinator is soliciting Thesis/Project Topic Proposal forms. The graduate coordinator will assign an Advisory Group for the culminating experience suitable to advance the student’s goals.

f. Progress to degree

Students who do not demonstrate adequate progress on their thesis during the first semester of PHIL 69199 Thesis I may, upon the recommendation of their advisory group and approval of the graduate faculty and chair, be switched to a non-thesis option. In addition, students who have enrolled in PHIL 69299 Thesis II for two consecutive semesters without demonstrating adequate progress toward completion of their thesis may, upon the recommendation of the graduate coordinator and approval of the graduate faculty and chair, be recommended for [dismissal](#).

Students who do not enroll in a course that contributes to the degree for a calendar year are considered to have voluntarily withdrawn from the university and will be inactivated by the registrar. To resume their degree program, such students will have to reapply, without a guarantee of being readmitted, even if the student withdrew in good standing (see §10. [Academic Progress](#) below).

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5. Advising

a. Advisory Groups

The graduate program employs a unique advising system that provides a broader advising experience for students. Prior to orientation week, the graduate coordinator will assign each incoming student an advisory group (AG) made up of two or three members of the graduate faculty. Students keep their advisory groups until they propose a thesis topic, when the graduate coordinator assigns a new advisory group appropriate to the student's topic area.

The advisory group is a resource for the student for succeeding in the graduate program. Issues of course selection, progress toward the degree, success in philosophy beyond the MA, and other professional activities are common topics in advisory group meetings. A student's advisors also provide an initial resource for addressing issues or difficulties that arise within or outside the program. The advisory group reviews and documents student course selection, and students should wait to register for classes until after the advisory group meeting. The department also encourages students to meet with advisory group members individually in less formal settings as needed throughout the program.

b. Thesis Director

The graduate coordinator assigns each student a thesis director upon satisfactory completion of the [Thesis Topic Proposal](#) form. The director is responsible for advising the student during the thesis, and will approve the draft sent to readers as well as the final draft of the thesis submitted to the college.

c. Other Advising Resources

Philosophy graduate students should understand that the department regards its graduate program as a collaborative enterprise. The graduate faculty embrace the pluralism of the department and encourage students to seek out advice from a range of sources, as each faculty member offers unique insights and experiences. In addition to the graduate faculty, the graduate coordinator and department chair are available for consultation about any matter pertaining to success in and beyond the graduate program.

d. Communications

The department, following university policy, communicates with students in the program primarily via email. Students must check their kent.edu email addresses "on a frequent and consistent basis" (or forward them to accounts that they check regularly), as faculty and staff usually expect a reply to

email within 24 hours during the academic year, and within a few days during summer (and respond similarly to email themselves).

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6. Calendars

The university [academic year calendar](#) is available online. Students should also consult the [registrar's calendar page](#). Here are some important dates in the graduate program:

August

- Orientation week is the week before classes begin in Fall
- Departmental orientation is held the Monday before classes begin
- Advisory groups for incoming students meet the Monday-Wednesday before classes begin; incoming students register for classes after meeting with their advisors
- Classes typically begin the Thursday before the last Monday in August
- Applications for December graduation are due the Friday of the first full week of classes

September

- Advisory groups for returning students meet during the third full week of classes; the student should prepare a final draft of the [Thesis Prospectus and Bibliography](#) form and have the advisory group sign the [Notification of Approved Thesis Topic](#) form

November

- Second week: oral defense deadline for students graduating in December
- Veterans Day (November 11), no classes
- Advisory groups meet; course selection for spring and progress report for thesis students
- Thanksgiving, no classes
- Fourth week: thesis filing deadline for students graduating in December

December

- Final exams
- Fall Semester Graduation

January

- Applications for May graduation are due the Friday of the first week of classes

- Advisory groups for Thesis I students meet during the third week of classes (AG meetings for second-year non-thesis students scheduled on an as-needed basis)

March

- Eligible students file [Thesis Topic Proposal](#) form
- Annual May 4th Philosophy Graduate Student Conference (held on the Saturday one week before the weekend leading into Spring Break)
- Spring Break
- Advisory groups for first-year students meet during Week 12 of the semester

April

- First week: oral defense deadline for students graduating in May
- Third week: thesis filing deadline for students graduating in May

May

- Final exams
- Spring Semester Graduation

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7. Orientation

The Graduate School organizes a [graduate student orientation](#) every year. All graduate students may, and new graduate students must, attend the orientation.

The department holds its orientation meeting the Monday before classes start. All students are required to attend this meeting, which the graduate coordinator schedules and organizes. Admitted students receive notice of the time and date of orientation with their admission letters, and the graduate coordinator follows up with details over the summer.

Upon arrival in the department, each Graduate Assistant is issued a key card which will open the door to the graduate student office (208 Bowman Hall). This card must be returned at the completion of the student's service as a Graduate Assistant. Each semester, a portion of final exam week is designated as "Office Cleanout Days;" all students in their last semester of service as Graduate Assistants must remove their belongings from the graduate student office and make an appointment to return the card to the departmental secretary during that time period. Details of the Office Cleanout Days will be sent to students toward the end of their final semester as a GA.

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8. Graduation

During the semester in which students expect to complete the requirements for the MA degree, they should apply for graduation by filing an application to graduate in FlashLine. The deadline for filing this form is generally in the first week of the semester. The university charges no fee for this application, and students who might graduate should file even if they are not certain that they will complete the requirements in that semester. A student who has applied for graduation but then does not graduate that term should notify the dean's office by email. The student must then reapply for graduation in a subsequent semester.

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9. Graduate Assistantships and Conference Travel Funding

The department offers a number of competitive, merit-based graduate assistantships in the form of teaching assistantships. These awards are the only financial aid available from the department. There are also small awards for students from historically underrepresented groups. Current information about the number and amount of these awards is available from the [graduate coordinator](#).

a. Application

At or near the time of initial application to the graduate program, interested applicants who apply to the program before the February 1 deadline must also file the [Application for Graduate Assistantship](#) form. No additional application is required, as decisions are based on the applicant's academic record. Ordinarily appointments are renewed, based on satisfactory performance and progress in the program, for a second year.

In exceptional cases, students who do not receive funding in their first year and who excel in all program activities may receive funding for their second year. Such students must file the [Application for Graduate Assistantship](#) form prior to appointment. Interested students should notify the [graduate coordinator](#) by February 1.

In order for the department to continue to offer competitive stipends, the department depends on graduate assistants filing the [FAFSA](#) and accepting any work-study funding for which they might be eligible (the graduate coordinator is able to explain the details of and rationale for this process). Students who receive an award of a graduate assistantship receive notice around the time of their admission.

b. Terms of Award

Departmental graduate assistants are teaching assistants who receive a stipend, a full tuition waiver (up to 12 credit hours per semester), subsidized health insurance, and workers' compensation. Awards are for one year, and students who make adequate progress in the program typically have

their awards renewed for a second year. Awards are not renewed beyond a second year in the program.

Teaching assistantships usually involve assisting with instruction, research, and administrative duties. Graduate assistants must take a full-time load (8 credit hours or more) each semester during the appointment and maintain at least a 3.0 GPA. Their service generally involves about 20 hours per week during the semester, and they must follow all applicable University policies. The assistantship does not cover summer.

The policy governing assistantships is the "[Role and Status of Graduate Student Appointees](#)."

The graduate appointments outlined below are intended to provide adequate support to enable students to spend the maximum amount of time on their studies, with the objective of completing the degree in two years. To this end, it is considered inappropriate for a full-time graduate appointee to be engaged in substantial additional employment during the academic year.

The Policy explicitly requires Graduate Student Appointees seeking additional *on-campus* employment to secure permission from the Dean of Graduate Studies by filing a request in FlashLine/Workflows. The Department of Philosophy extends this requirement to include *all* additional employment. Any questions concerning this policy and additional employment should be directed to the [graduate coordinator](#).

c. Teaching

First semester graduate assistants generally assist with a large section of 100 or more students and with multiple GAs, where they assist with grading, hold office hours, and may have the opportunity to give a lecture or lead an in-class discussion. They also learn about everything that goes into planning, teaching, and administering a successful introductory-level philosophy class. In subsequent semesters, graduate assistants often work one-on-one with a faculty mentor in a smaller section where they are the only GA, and where they have an opportunity to learn more about class design, administration, lesson planning, and instruction.

d. Termination

Graduate assistants who do not meet the contractual requirements of their appointment may have their appointment terminated by the department. The department chair takes this decision in consultation with the graduate coordinator and the graduate faculty. In the case of termination or non-renewal of appointment, the chair will notify the student in writing.

e. Departmental Funding for Conference Travel

The department offers an annual \$100 travel reimbursement to all MA students presenting or commenting at conferences. Details are as follows:

- Each MA student is eligible to receive one \$100 award during each of their two years in the program

In order to receive the award, students must apply for [the DTA \(Domestic Travel Award\) or ITA \(International Travel Award\)](#) offered by the GSS; applicants are eligible for departmental funding even if they do not actually receive the DTA or ITA

- In order to receive the departmental award, the student must be on the conference program as either a presenter or a commenter

To apply for the departmental award, students should email proof that they will be presenting or commenting at a conference, and that they have applied for the DTA or ITA, to the departmental secretary as soon as these documents are available. While at the conference, they should save any receipts from meals, lodging, air travel, and conference fees, and give those receipts to the departmental secretary after their return, along with a map printout of their route if they drove to the conference. The request will then be processed and a reimbursement will be issued.

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10. Academic Progress

a. University Requirements

This section is based on the corresponding sections of the [Guide to Graduate Education](#). In case of any conflict between this handbook and the Guide, the Guide will take precedence. The university requires graduate students to:

- maintain a GPA of at least 3.00
- attain at least a C in each class (grades below C do not count toward the degree)
- earn no more than 8 total hours of B- grades or lower, including no more than 4 hours of C grades
- continue to make progress toward the degree: in particular, the number of I and IP grades might indicate insufficient progress
- register for at least 8 hours each semester, if full-time, or at least 2 hours within a calendar year, or request a leave of absence
- register for classes within one year of admission to retain active status (or reapply thereafter)
- complete the requirements for the MA degree within 6 years of first registering

For details concerning these requirements, please consult the [university catalog](#) and the [Graduate Academic Standing Policy](#). Note that this is a higher standard than what is stated in that policy, as allowed by the policy.

b. Leaves of Absence

In exceptional circumstances, it is possible for graduate students, including graduate assistants, to request and be granted a [leave of absence](#) from the program. Students expecting to miss a

significant amount of time and course work should consult the graduate coordinator prior to filing a request in FlashLine/Workflows. Students granted a leave may [apply for re-enrollment](#).

Students who do not request a leave and do not enroll in a course that contributes to the degree for a calendar year are considered to have voluntarily withdrawn from the university and will be inactivated by the registrar. To resume their degree program, such students will have to reapply, without a guarantee of being readmitted, even if the student withdrew in good standing.

c. Academic Standing

The graduate faculty undertake a regular review of the progress and performance of all graduate students and graduate assistants during the academic year. Per [university policy](#), students who do not exhibit sufficient progress toward the degree, who do not meet university, college, or department requirements, or who fail to satisfy university expectations for student conduct, are subject to academic sanction. Academic sanctions offer a warning system to enable struggling students to remain in the program. Students can receive a written warning, probation, or dismissal.

Warning: Students who earn a grade below B in a course (or a U in a course with S/U grading) will receive a written academic warning, which the department issues when students fall slightly below expectations. Subsequent grades below B may result in probation or dismissal from the program. The warning will include an explicit statement of applicable university policy and expectations for future performance. Students receiving a written warning remain in good standing and may be appointed or reappointed as graduate assistants.

Probation: When the graduate faculty votes to impose an academic sanction of probation, the graduate coordinator forwards the recommendation to the dean. The recommendation will include the grounds and duration of the probation, and the conditions that the student must meet in order to return to good academic standing. A student who does not meet those conditions in that term is subject to dismissal. Students on probation are not in good standing and may not be appointed or reappointed as graduate assistants. Upon a student's satisfying the conditions of probation, the graduate coordinator will forward a recommendation to the dean to return the student to good academic standing.

Dismissal: Students who fail to make adequate progress toward completion of a program of study, who fail to meet the terms of their academic probation, who fail to satisfy university expectations for student conduct, or whose academic performance indicates little chance of obtaining the minimum grades required for graduation are no longer allowed to enroll at the university. Upon consultation with the graduate faculty, the graduate coordinator may recommend to the dean the dismissal of a student from the program. When the department recommends dismissal, students who wish to do so may appeal to the dean. Instructions for such an appeal are included in the dean's notification of the decision to dismiss.

Students on an approved academic leave of absence may not be recommended for probation or dismissal.

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11. Grievance Procedure

The department follows [university policy](#) concerning grievances or complaints against faculty. The process begins with an attempt at informal resolution between the student and the faculty member. At any time, students may seek the counsel of the [university student ombuds](#). The formal complaint process begins with a consultation with the department chair and submission of the detailed complaint in writing. In case of a complaint against the chair, the student may consult with the graduate coordinator.

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12. Staff

The department administrator is the chair, currently Prof. [Michael Byron](#). Any issue may be brought to the chair, though customarily students address most issues to the department secretary or graduate coordinator.

The graduate coordinator is responsible for administering the graduate program. The current graduate coordinator is Prof. [Gina Zavota](#). Most concerns about the graduate program, from admissions to graduation, should be addressed to the graduate coordinator. Any suggestions for improving or updating this handbook should go to the graduate coordinator.

The department's secretary is Ms. [Theresa Reed](#). The secretary is available to graduate students who need to troubleshoot registration issues, manage paperwork pertaining to graduate assistant appointments, and similar issues.

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13. Forms

[Application for Graduate Assistantship](#)

Application for Graduation: now in FlashLine

[Application for Re-enrollment](#)

[BA/MA Combined Degree Application](#)

[Letter of Recommendation](#)

[Notification of Approved Thesis Topic](#)

[Online Graduate School Application](#)

Re-application for Graduation: now in FlashLine

Request for Additional Employment: now in FlashLine

Request for Leave of Absence: now in FlashLine

[Role and Status of Graduate Appointees](#)

[Style Guide and Instructions for Preparing Thesis](#)

[Summer Thesis Supervision Proposal](#)

[Thesis Defense Procedure](#)

[Thesis Evaluation Form](#)

[Thesis Evaluation Procedure](#)

[Thesis Prospectus and Bibliography](#)

[Thesis Topic Proposal](#)

[Transfer of Graduate Credit](#)

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