

UB PHILOSOPHY GRADUATE STUDENT HANDBOOK

Revised February 2025

Welcome to graduate studies in philosophy at the University at Buffalo.

This handbook presents the Philosophy Department's rules and requirements for the M.A. and Ph.D. programs in philosophy. Students are responsible for being familiar with department and university rules. University-wide rules are available from the Graduate School's [policy library](#). In case of conflict, university rules trump department rules.

This document will be updated periodically. The department reserves the right to change these rules during the time the student is in the program, but continuing students are governed by the rules that were in place at the time they entered the department.

Rules regarding updates to this document: changes to rules in sections 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 10 must be voted on by the philosophy faculty. Minor amendments to those sections designed to clarify meaning, and changes made to the other sections, can be made by the department chairperson or the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) without a departmental vote. Please contact the department chair or DGS with corrections or suggestions for improvements with this handbook.

Note: Throughout this document, terms such as 'second year,' 'third year,' etc. refer to benchmarks or deadlines for students pursuing full-time graduate work. Appropriate part-time equivalents will be substituted for students pursuing part-time graduate work at different paces.

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RULES & REQUIREMENTS

1. APPLYING TO THE PROGRAM

1.1 Philosophical background

Ph.D. program: Applicants to the Ph.D. program must have—at least—the equivalent of a minor in philosophy. A major in philosophy is not required but is highly recommended. It is recommended that prior coursework include at least one course in logic or critical thinking; at least one course in ethics; at least one course in metaphysics, epistemology, philosophy of language, philosophy of mind, or philosophy of science; and at least two courses in the history of philosophy. Applicants to the Ph.D. program must have maintained at least a 3.0 GPA as an undergraduate. This condition can be waived in special cases, including: a much higher GPA in philosophy courses only, marked improvement through one's undergraduate career, or a graduate GPA at or above 3.0. The department may encourage applicants to the Ph.D. program to consider applying to the M.A. program instead when the applicant's background is deemed insufficient for acceptance into the Ph.D. program.

M.A. program: There is no formal requirement regarding the number of philosophy courses required for application to the M.A. program. It is recommended, however, that the applicant have taken some philosophy courses prior to applying. It is recommended that prior coursework include at least one course in logic or critical thinking; at least one course in ethics; at least one course in metaphysics, epistemology, philosophy of language, philosophy of mind, or philosophy of science; and at least two courses in the history of philosophy. Those who have taken very few philosophy courses might consider coming initially as a non-matriculated student (see below). Applicants to the M.A. program must have maintained at least a 3.0 GPA as an undergraduate. This condition can be waived in special cases, including: a much higher GPA in philosophy courses only, marked improvement through one's undergraduate career, or a graduate GPA at or above 3.0. Students in the UB Philosophy M.A. program can apply to the Ph.D. program before completion of the M.A. program.

Non-matriculated students: Individuals interested in non-matriculated studies (not actively working toward a degree) should submit a Graduate School admissions application with all transcript of previous studies. Letters of recommendation are recommended. Applications are approved or denied by the DGS. The student must obtain permission from the instructor of each course they intend to take. A non-matriculated student can take a maximum of 12 credits four courses. These credits can later be applied to department requirements if the student is accepted into the M.A. or Ph.D. program.

1.2 Application deadlines: The deadline for applying to the Ph.D. program for fall entry is **Dec. 15** of the previous year. Ph.D. students are only accepted for programs starting in the fall semester. The deadline for application the M.A. program for fall entry is **Apr. 15**. The deadline for application for non-matriculated students for fall entry is **June 3**.

1.3 Application materials: All applications and supporting materials must be submitted through UB's [online application system](#). Applications for the M.A. and Ph.D. programs should include:

- (a) A sample of philosophical writing. (Recommended length 12-20 pages)
- (b) A brief statement of purpose. (Up to 500 words)
- (c) Three letters of recommendation. The letters should provide appraisals of undergraduate work and prospects for success at the graduate level. Letters from philosophy professors are preferred.
- (d) Transcripts from all prior undergraduate and graduate coursework.
- (e) International students must provide proof (in the form of examination scores) of having satisfied the university's minimal criteria for English Proficiency. The university sets the following minimums: TOEFL (IBT): 79; TOEFL (ITP Plus): 550; IELTS: 6.5 (no sub-score below 6.0). This requirement is automatically waived for international students who are already in the US to complete a degree program. The language requirement will not be waived for other applicants.

Application fees cannot be waived.

2. ACCEPTANCE INTO THE PROGRAM

2.1 Campus visits: Each spring, the department often makes arrangements for admitted students to visit the philosophy department. Prospective students are welcome to visit at other times, but the arranged visit is the applicant's best opportunity to meet other accepted students, faculty, and current students. Visits by applicants should be scheduled by contacting the graduate administrator or the DGS. Prospective students are advised to contact current graduate students. See the department's [graduate student directory](#) for a list of graduate students and their philosophical interests.

2.2. Notification of intention to enroll: Applicants to the Ph.D. program who have been offered admission must use UB's application system by **April 15** to notify UB and the Philosophy Department of whether they will accept the department's offer. Admitted applicants to the M.A. program must notify the department by **June 15**. UB undergraduates who are awarded provisional acceptance into the M.A. program must notify the department by **May 1**. Applicants must also notify the DGS directly by email. Students who are accepted without being offered funding will be put on a waitlist for funding. Students who have accepted our offer of admission (funded or unfunded) may delay their start date by at most one semester. After that, they must reapply via the standard process.

2.3 Advisor assignment: The DGS will assign each new student an advisor before their first semester. Students can change their advisor after completing their second semester in the program. They must obtain the consent of the new advisor and notify the DGS and graduate administrator for the change to be official.

2.4 Pre-registration consultation: Students must contact their advisors and discuss their course registration prior to the start of each term. Meetings can be conducted via email, if necessary. Failure to consult one's advisor before classes begin will result in an automatic loss of good standing (see §10). This rule holds for every semester the student is in the department.

2.5 Establishing New York State residency: The university requires funded students who are US citizens to obtain New York residency as soon as possible and requires that they do so by the beginning of their second year. Funded students who fail to do so will be billed by the university for the difference in cost between in-state and out-of-state tuition.

2.6 TA orientations: All new students who have been granted departmental assistantships must attend the Graduate School's TA orientation that is held prior to the start of the fall semester and the departmental orientation that is held the Friday before fall classes begin.

2.7 Responsible Conduct of Research training: All incoming Ph.D. students must complete a Responsible Conduct of Research Training course before the beginning of their first semester in the program. The university wants to make sure that all Ph.D. students understand the norms, principles, and regulations that govern responsible research. The course covers topics such as different kinds of conflicts of interest in research, common forms of research misconduct, the proper treatment of human subjects in social scientific and medical research, and how to handle identifying personal information of subjects enrolled in studies. The Responsible Conduct of Research course is offered by [Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative](#) (CITI). The course is comprised of a series of modules, each of which consists of readings and case studies and ends with a quiz covering the material. Students must complete the course with an average score of 80 percent or higher across all module quizzes. You should allow at least 90 minutes to complete the course.

3. FUNDING

3.1 Departmental assistantships: The funding package offered to a select number of Ph.D. students each year includes a tuition scholarship (i.e., free tuition), an assistantship, and health insurance. Currently, the assistantship pays \$23,000. In exchange for this funding, students serve as Research Assistants (RAs), Teaching Assistants (TAs), or course instructors. Students provided with department assistantships must maintain a GPA of 3.5 or higher in order to remain funded (see §10.3.2 for details). Unfunded students will be considered for funding (if and when this is available) each year they are in the program, up to the end of their fourth year. There is no fee, and no application is required. Assistantships, when offered, will be for at most one year at a time, and their renewal is contingent upon students making sufficient progress in the program and performing the duties associated with their assistantship sufficiently well.

3.2 Presidential and Graduate School Fellowships: The DGS, in consultation with the dept. admissions committee, will nominate applicants offered assistantships for Presidential and Graduate School Fellowships. These provide additional funds on top of the student's annual stipend. Scholarship amounts for 2024-2025 are \$10,000.

3.3 Arthur A. Schomburg Fellowship program: The Arthur A. Schomburg Fellowship program is sponsored by New York State and offers support for historically underrepresented students in graduate programs across the university. The DGS will contact eligible accepted students to determine their interest in applying. The scholarship amount for 2024-2025 was \$12,500.

3.4 Advanced Ph.D. Fellowships: The UB Humanities Institute provides \$12,000 to annual winners of its dissertation fellowships. Details for applying can be found [here](#).

3.5 Summer and winter session teaching: Four to six graduate students are typically needed to teach philosophy courses (as full instructor) during the six-week summer and three-week winter sessions. Most of these courses are taught online. Unlike fall and spring teaching positions, both funded and unfunded students are permitted to apply for these teaching positions. However (except in unusual circumstances) students must have taken Teaching philosophy (PHI 604) and have prior TA experience in order to be considered. Students applying to teach these summer or winter courses are advised to previously TA or audit the same course when taught by a professor, in order to familiarize themselves with the course subject and an experienced instructor's approach. Students teaching these courses must have their syllabi approved by the DGS well before the term begins. See §9.6 for information about appropriate syllabi. Summer and winter classes may be cancelled due to insufficient enrollment.

3.6 Paid graders, office assistants, and work study positions: There are occasionally funds available to pay students to grade for faculty or assist the staff in the office with clerical work. Some students may also qualify for federally funded work study positions. When these opportunities arise, the DGS will give unfunded students first priority.

4. FULL-TIME STATUS AND LEAVES OF ABSENCE

4.1 Full-time status: To be considered full time by loan agencies, the U.S. Immigration service, or for tuition award purposes, students must be registered for a minimum of 12 credit hours per semester. Exceptions:

- (i) Students with a graduate, teaching, or research assistantship, must be registered for a minimum of 9 credit hours per semester to be considered full time.
- (ii) Students who have filed an Application to Candidacy (ATC) form and are working on their theses, dissertations, or M.A. projects, must be registered for a minimum of 1 credit hour per semester to be considered full time.
- (iii) Students participating in a university-approved foreign exchange project must be registered to the extent required by the schedule listed on the chart found on the full-time status form to be considered full time.

4.2 Leaves of absence: During their time in one of the department's graduate programs, students may apply for a leave of absence, should the need arise. Students must follow the Graduate School's [policies on requesting leaves of absence](#). For funded students, any period of leave will be counted as part of the funding commitment initially given to an entering student. There can be no guarantee that funding lost through such a leave will be restored. Decisions regarding the loss of funding during the leave will be at the discretion of the DGS. Students who fail to register without the permission of the DGS will be considered on unauthorized leave and may have to reapply for admission to the program.

5. THE SYMBOLIC LOGIC REQUIREMENT

Every incoming M.A. and Ph.D. student must either pass the symbolic logic competency exam or receive a B+ or better in an independent study (PHI 599) with a professor who is teaching PHI 215 (Symbolic logic). Previous logic courses cannot satisfy the symbolic logic requirement.

The symbolic logic competency exam will be roughly equivalent to a final exam in UB's PHI 215 (Symbolic logic). It will be offered before the beginning of the fall semester and at other times throughout the academic year as necessary.

Every incoming first-year student must take the early fall semester symbolic logic competency exam. We encourage first-year students who do not pass it to audit PHI 215 or take an independent study (PHI 599) on symbolic logic with the instructor of PHI 215 during that fall semester. Students who take an independent study will typically be required to (i) attend undergraduate lectures in PHI 215, (ii) complete all homework assignments and exams in the course, and (iii) do some extra reading and some extra problems on some homework assignments or exams.

Every first-year student who has neither passed the Exam nor received a B+ or better in an independent study in symbolic logic must take the symbolic logic competency exam every time that it is offered. If students who have not yet satisfied the requirement fail the early fall exam in their second year, then they must enroll in an independent study in symbolic logic in the fall of their second year.

6. Transfer Credits

6.1 Transfer credits: Students who have completed prior graduate coursework in philosophy can transfer credits toward their degree at UB. Only coursework completed with a grade of B+ or higher will be eligible for transfer. M.A. students can transfer up to 6 credit hours, and Ph.D. students can transfer up to 24. Transfer credits can satisfy up to two Ph.D. breadth requirements. Students should meet with their advisors to decide which credits to propose for transfer. With the assistance of their advisors, students should fill out and submit a [Graduate Student Petition for Transfer Credit form](#) to the DGS for approval during their first year in the program. Syllabi from prior coursework and transcripts showing a grade of B+ or higher on prior coursework are required. The DGS will rule on the proposal, after which the approved proposal will be forwarded to the Graduate School for final approval.

6.2 Transfer credits and Ph.D. funding: UB's College of Arts & Sciences (CAS) recently made an important change to graduate student funding. It used to be the case that CAS reduced the total amount of funding that funded Ph.D. students received if they transferred in credit hours from prior graduate coursework. So, even if the original offer letter that some of you received stated "Any transfer credits approved for use toward your Ph.D. program will reduce the total number of credits covered by this [tuition] scholarship," that is no longer the case.

6.3 Approval of transfer credit requests: Not all transfer credit requests will be approved. A common reason for denied requests is that a prior course did not have as much philosophical content as it should have in order to count toward your Ph.D. in PHI. For example, some courses that advertise themselves as being history of philosophy courses may be history or literature courses that feature some philosophical content but lack a strong philosophical focus. Another reason for denial is that some humanities disciplines count things as philosophy that are not considered to be academic philosophy on even a very broad conception of the discipline. Keep in mind that even though transferring in a number of credits is a possibility, this does not necessarily mean that it is a good idea for you to do. Your goal should be to get the best philosophical training that you can during your time at UB, and that may mean taking more rather than fewer courses.

7. M.A. Program

7.1 Required credits: M.A. students need to earn 30 credits from seminars or independent studies to obtain their degree. Teaching philosophy (PHI 604) is not considered a seminar or independent study and so cannot count toward the M.A. degree. However, credits from these courses can be counted toward the doctoral degree if the student enters the Ph.D. program at a later time.

7.2 Required courses: M.A. students must satisfy the symbolic logic requirement (§5). M.A. students must register for 3 credits of M.A. Guidance (PHI 701) while working on their M.A. project (see §7.3).

7.3 M.A. project: M.A. students must complete a one-paper project under the supervision of a member of the philosophy faculty. The paper should be between 5,000 and 8,000 words and will typically consist of a rewritten and improved seminar paper. The project is to be completed within one semester. During that term, the student must sign up for 3 credits of M.A. Guidance (PHI 701). Only one instructor is required to approve the M.A. paper project, namely the faculty supervisor. If the M.A. project is a rewritten version of a seminar paper, then it is advisable that the M.A. project supervisor be the same faculty member who oversaw the writing of the original seminar paper. If the instructor under whom the student wrote the first version of the paper is not available, the student can ask another professor to be the M.A. project supervisor. In such cases, the supervisor may ask to see the original instructor's comments and may require the student to follow that instructor's suggestions.

7.4 Courses taken for S/U grades: M.A. students have the option to take up to 6 credits for a grade of satisfactory (S) or unsatisfactory (U) rather than the typical A-F letter grade. Students can take at most one S/U course per semester. **Students who wish to take a graduate course on an S/U basis must submit a written request to the instructor by the last day of the second week of classes.** The instructor's decision will be final and will be transmitted to the student in writing. The course instructor cannot require a final paper if the student is taking the course S/U. Instructors may decline to list their seminars as S/U. If an M.A. student has taken six credits for S/U grades, then enters the Ph.D. program, they are allowed only ten additional S/U credits, one of which must be used for Teaching philosophy (PHI 604).

7.5 Incompletes: Students can take an incomplete in a course if and only if they receive permission from their instructor. Every student who wants to receive an incomplete for a course must fill out the [Petition for Incomplete Extension form](#). The form must contain a deadline for completing work and must be signed by the instructor. The instructor must send fully signed copies to the DGS and the graduate administrator. In the absence of an alternate established deadline, the deadline for resolving an incomplete is four weeks from the final day of the term according to the university academic calendar. Alternative deadlines (shorter or longer) may be set by the instructor based upon the reason the incomplete is being requested or individual circumstances. Students should be aware of the potential impact of unresolved incompletes on their grades and standing in the program.

7.6 Independent studies: M.A. students may take only three credits of independent studies. Exceptions may be made for those with specialized M.A. studies with the approval of their advisor and the DGS.

7.7 Applied ontology track: Applied ontologists are needed by private industry, governments, non-profit organizations, and other institutions to develop and manage large databases and directories, to model and analyze complex structures and processes, and to build systems for data and enterprise integration. Students interested in this field who wish to acquire a background in the theory and practice of applied ontology may pursue the applied ontology (AO) track within the M.A. Requirements for the AO track include the following.

7.7.1 Advising: Each AO track student will be assigned an AO faculty member as their advisor.

7.7.2 Required courses: AO track students must complete PHI 531 (Problems in ontology) and PHI 598 (Applied ontology seminar).

7.7.3 Electives: AO track students must complete at least 3 courses from the following list of approved elective courses. Students can substitute courses that are not listed below to satisfy the elective requirement only with the approval of their advisors.

- PHI 517 – Introduction to logic for advanced students
- PHI 520 – Philosophy of science
- PHI 530 – Ontological engineering
- PHI 547 – Formal ontology
- PHI 548 – Ontology for data science
- PHI 549 – Applied ontology
- PHI 550 – Spatial ontology
- PHI 616 – Logic for ontology
- PHI 634 – Topics in metaphysics and epistemology
- PHI 650 – Social ontology
- BMI 501 – Survey of biomedical informatics
- BMI 508 – Biomedical ontology
- BMI 521 – Logic programming for biomedical informatics
- BMI 708– Advanced topics in biomedical ontology
- LIN 567 – Computational linguistics
- MGS 596 – NLP in management research
- MGS 628 – Data visualization
- MGS 655 – Distributed computing and big data technologies
- MGS 660 – Big data information management
- URP 569 – GIS applications
- GEO 511 – Spatial data science
- GEO 595 – Database design for GIS
- CSE 542 – Software engineering concepts
- CSE 560 – Data models and query languages
- CSE 562 – Database systems
- CSE 563 – Knowledge representation

7.7.4 Research groups: AO track students are required to participate in regularly scheduled AO meetings, working groups, and research project teams via Zoom or similar platforms under the direction of their advisor.

7.7.5 M.A. project: AO track students must complete an M.A. project on an AO topic under the guidance of their advisor during their final semester in the program.

7.8 Counting non-philosophy courses toward the M.A.: M.A. students need the approval of their advisors and the DGS to take any courses outside the department. M.A. students applying to take courses outside the department must demonstrate the significance of the non-philosophy course to their program of study. Students might also require the approval of the non-philosophy instructor to enroll in a non-philosophy course.

7.9 Satisfactory progress in the M.A. program

First year:

- Complete the symbolic logic requirement.
- Complete 24 credits of course work.

Second year:

- Complete the required 30 credits total.
- Register for 3 credits of M.A. guidance.
- Complete M.A. project.

Note: Throughout this document, terms such as ‘first year,’ ‘second year,’ etc. refer to benchmarks or deadlines for students pursuing full-time graduate work. Appropriate part-time equivalents will be substituted for students pursuing part-time graduate work at different paces.

7.10 Graduate School forms and deadlines: As students near completion of the M.A., they must [apply for graduation](#) at least three and a half months in advance.

8. PH.D. PROGRAM.

8.1 Required credits: 72 credits are required for the Ph.D., 45 of which must be obtained in philosophy department seminars or independent studies. 15 of these 45 credits may be taken S/U, but the 45 credits cannot include credits taken to satisfy the symbolic logic requirement. The remaining 27 credits can be credits from additional seminars in philosophy, independent studies, dissertation guidance, PHI 604 (Teaching philosophy), and courses taken outside the department. Undergraduate foreign language courses needed for dissertations do not count toward the 72 credits.

8.2 Counting non-philosophy courses toward the Ph.D.: Ph.D. students need the approval of their advisors and the DGS to take any courses outside the philosophy department. Ph.D. students applying to take courses outside the department must demonstrate the significance of the non-philosophy course to their program of study. Approval of the advisor and DGS must be given before enrolling. Students may also require the approval of the non-philosophy instructor to enroll in non-philosophy courses.

8.3 Seminar breadth requirements: Ph.D. students must complete and receive a grade of B or higher in **seven** philosophy seminars that include the following.

(i) At least one seminar in formal methods: This can include seminars in modal logic, meta-logic, logic for applied ontology, formal semantics, decision theory, game theory, probability, statistics, experimental design, formal epistemology, computational modelling, and other formal courses in philosophy or applied ontology.

(ii) At least one seminar in the history of philosophy

(iii) At least one seminar in metaphysics and epistemology: This requirement is understood broadly to include philosophy of language, philosophy of mind, and philosophy of science.

(iv) At least one seminar in value theory: This requirement is understood broadly to include ethics, aesthetics, philosophy of law, social philosophy, and political philosophy.

The DGS and faculty instructors will decide which philosophy seminars count toward which breadth requirement. If you are unsure, please consult with the DGS committee prior to registration. **At least four of the seminars that satisfy the breadth requirements must be seminars taken within the UB Philosophy Department – not transfer credits or courses taken from other departments at UB.** Seminar breadth requirements cannot be satisfied by independent studies or courses taken for an S/U grade.

Students may substitute a graduate-level course from outside of the philosophy department (e.g., statistics) for the formal methods seminar requirement in philosophy, with the approval of their advisors and the DGS.

8.4 Other required courses

8.4.1 Intensive writing seminar for first-year students: This course is required of all first-year Ph.D. students and is usually taken in the fall of their first year. This course has more assigned writing than the typical seminar. Faculty will rotate as instructor for the seminar. The intensive writing seminar will also satisfy one of the breadth requirements. Students in the M.A. program are not required to take the course but can enroll with the instructor's permission. The course may not be taken for an S/U grade.

8.4.2 Teaching philosophy (PHI 604): All Ph.D. students must take the one-credit S/U-graded Teaching philosophy seminar (Phi 604). The course is typically offered in the spring.

8.5 Language requirement: If it is determined by the student's advisor that a student needs one or more languages to become qualified in their area of specialization, the student may take courses from one of the language departments, study independently, etc. When the student feels ready, he or she is given a passage from an appropriate philosophical text to translate with a dictionary within a set time-period (1-3 hours, usually). Undergraduate foreign language courses needed for dissertations do not count toward the 72 required credits.

8.6 Courses taken for S/U grades: Ph.D. students have the option of taking 15 credits worth of courses for a grade of satisfactory (S) or unsatisfactory (U), rather than the typical A-F letter grade. Students can take at most one three-credit S/U course per semester. **Students who wish to take a graduate course on an S/U basis must submit a written request to the instructor by the last day of the second week of classes.** The instructor's decision will be final and will be transmitted to the student in writing. The course instructor cannot require a final paper if the student is taking the course S/U. Instructors may decline to list their seminars as S/U. No course taken for S/U shall satisfy the symbolic logic requirement or a seminar breadth requirement.

8.7 Incompletes: Students may take an incomplete for a course with the permission of the instructor. Students are discouraged from taking incompletes, and instructor approval is not guaranteed. Every student who wants to take an incomplete must fill out the [Petition for Incomplete Extension form](#). The form must contain a deadline for completing work and must be signed by the instructor. The instructor must send fully signed copies to the DGS and graduate administrator. The default departmental deadline for resolving an incomplete is four weeks from the final day of the term according to the university academic calendar. Alternative deadlines (shorter or longer) may be set based upon the reason the incomplete is being requested or individual circumstances. Students are advised to be aware of the potential impact of unresolved incompletes on their grades and standing in the program (see particularly §10.2).

8.8 Qualifying paper (QP) requirement

8.8.1: Qualifying paper: All Ph.D. programs require students to perform some task that demonstrates sufficient ability to complete academic work within their discipline at a sufficiently high level in order to be approved to make the transition from early coursework to the dissertation stage. Some programs require comprehensive exams on the history of philosophy. Others require oral exams on key topics within a student's chosen area of specialization. Our program requires second-year students to submit a qualifying paper that demonstrates sufficient philosophical potential to write a successful dissertation. Your QP should be the best paper you've written at UB. Since demonstrating potential to successfully complete a Ph.D. means displaying an ability to do research, students should write about issues that are live options when viewed in light of the current literature and should take account of the most obviously relevant literature on the topic. Students have two chances to submit a sufficiently strong QP during the spring semester of their second year.

8.8.2 Submission guidelines: All Ph.D. students are required to submit a qualifying paper by the Friday before the beginning of their fourth semester. Late submissions will not be accepted.

Each QP must:

- Be 4500 to 6250 words (including the abstract, footnotes, and references)
- Include an abstract of no more than 250 words that appears on the first page of the QP (not as a separate document) that is informative enough to provide readers with a good idea of what they will encounter in your paper
- Be prepared for anonymous review (no references to the author anywhere in the QP)
- Be submitted electronically as a Word document to the DGS by the Friday before the first week of their fourth semester
- Be formatted in APA style, unless written permission to use another formatting and citation style is obtained from the DGS prior to submission
- Follow US rather than UK spelling and punctuation conventions
- Feature limited use of footnotes and endnotes

QPs should be revised versions of seminar papers that were written at UB. Students who wish to submit any other kind of QP must obtain written permission from the DGS.

8.8.3 Evaluating the qualifying paper: Each QP will be evaluated by the graduate faculty for signs of the author's potential for successfully completing a dissertation. QPs will be graded by members of the graduate faculty on the following scale.

- A: Shows philosophical potential sufficient to continue in the Ph.D. program
- B: Shows philosophical potential sufficient to complete an M.A. degree, but insufficient to continue in the Ph.D. program
- C: Shows philosophical potential insufficient to complete the M.A. degree

In order for a student to be permitted to continue in the Ph.D. program, their QP must receive an A from at least half of the evaluators. The highest grade bestowed by at least half of the evaluators determines the letter grade of a QP. So, if two-thirds of the evaluators assign an A, the grade for the QP will be an A. If two-thirds assign a B, it will be a B. If exactly half of the evaluators assign an A, and half assign a B, the overall QP grade will be an A. If a QP receives four As, three Bs, and two Cs, the student will not be allowed to continue in the Ph.D. program. Even though the most commonly assigned grade in this case is an A, more than half of the evaluators assigned a grade that is below an A; and at least half must assign an A in order for the student to continue. In this case, the letter grade for the QP would be a B because at least half of the evaluators assigned a grade that is above a C, but less than half assigned a grade that was an A.

Students who receive either a B or a C on their first-round QP submission have the option of submitting a revised QP later in the semester. Students who receive a B during the first round but choose not to submit a second QP will be dismissed from the Ph.D. program at the end of the semester in which they submitted their QP. However, such students may stay in the graduate program for an additional semester to complete an M.A. project and any other requirements needed for the M.A. degree. Students should not take more than one additional semester to complete their M.A. Students who receive a C during the first round but choose not to submit a revised QP will be dismissed from the Ph.D. program at the end of the semester in which they submitted their QP and must leave the graduate program without receiving a degree.

After first round QP submissions are received, graduate faculty are given a few weeks to grade and comment on them. Initial grades and comments are shared among all faculty members, and faculty discuss these evaluations for approximately one week. Evaluators generally give more weight to the opinions of faculty members with greater expertise on a given topic, and faculty are given the opportunity to change their initial grades in light of discussion. At the end of the discussion period, a final grade is assigned to each QP, and anonymized faculty comments and individual grades are sent to students. If a first-round QP earns less than an A, faculty comments will indicate whether the student should submit a rewritten version of the QP or (less commonly) submit a completely new paper for the second round.

The threshold for earning an A on a QP is higher than that for earning an A on a seminar paper (cf. grade inflation) but lower than what is required for having a paper accepted for publication by a respected journal. The threshold is also lower than what is required for having a dissertation chapter approved by one's dissertation committee. If an A seminar paper has not been significantly revised and improved, there is a very good chance that it will not receive a passing grade as a QP. However, a successful QP does not need to be publishable.

8.8.4 Second-round qualifying paper submissions: Any student whose initial QP receives a grade of either B or C has the option (and is generally encouraged) to submit a revised QP later in the semester. Second-round QPs must be submitted by two weeks before the last day of classes in the spring semester. Second-round QPs should generally be revised and resubmitted versions of initial QPs unless students are explicitly instructed to submit entirely new papers. The grade a student

receives on their second-round QP, if higher, will replace the grade for the initial QP, and will count as the student's final grade for the qualifying paper requirement. If the new grade is not higher than the initial grade, the initial grade will stand.

Students who receive a B on their second-round QP will be dismissed from the Ph.D. program at the end of the semester in which they submitted their QP but may remain in the graduate program for an additional semester in order to complete an M.A. project and any other requirements needed for the M.A. Students who receive a C on their second-round QP will be dismissed from the department at the end of the semester in which they submitted their QP and will not be allowed to complete a graduate degree.

8.8.5 Faculty assistance with QPs: Students should consult with at least one faculty member about the seminar paper they plan to revise and submit as a QP. Ideally, students should discuss the matter with the faculty member for whom their paper was originally written. Students may ask such a faculty member to provide an additional round of comments on a revised version of their seminar paper, but they should not ask for more rounds of feedback after that. Students should ask only two other faculty members for a single round of comments each on their prospective QP.

In the past, some students submitted QPs without seeking the advice or guidance of faculty members, and this sometimes resulted in the submission of papers that were not suitable as QPs. In recent years, a different problem has become more prevalent. Some students have sought so many rounds of faculty feedback from so many faculty that some faculty have felt like semipartial coauthors on the resulting papers. A successful QP is supposed to indicate that a student has the potential ability to successfully complete a dissertation in philosophy. Its purpose is not to show that a team consisting of the student, four faculty members, and a half dozen helpful others has the collective ability to construct a philosophical paper of sufficient quality.

Teaching faculty should not be asked for assistance with QPs (e.g., in the form of providing comments on QP drafts or advice about appropriate topics or formats), as this goes beyond the scope of their departmental duties.

8.8.6 QP topics: Students should submit QPs in the areas of specialization (AOSs) in which they plan to write their dissertations and should work with faculty who have expertise in that AOS to prepare a QP for submission.

Students planning to write dissertations in the area of philosophy, politics, and economics (PPE) should submit QPs on topics within PPE. These QPs will be graded by graduate PPE faculty. As of Fall 2024, graduate faculty working in PPE include Profs. Ryan Muldoon, Justin Bruner, Alex Oprea, and Alex Schaefer.

Students planning to write dissertations in applied ontology (AO) should submit QPs on topics within AO, and these will be graded by graduate AO faculty. As of Fall 2024, graduate AO faculty include Profs. Barry Smith, John Beverley, Maureen Donnelly, and Thomas Bittner.

Students planning to write dissertations in other, somewhat more traditional areas of philosophy should submit QPs in those areas. These QPs will be graded by the remaining graduate faculty, which as of Fall 2024 include Profs. James Beebe, Stewart Duncan, David Hershenov, James Lawler, Lewis Powell, Daniel Stephens, and Neil Williams.

The primary rationale behind this new approach to the QP is that the time students spend revising and polishing QPs on topics that are unrelated to their chosen field of study or dissertation topic could be better spent working on something that will prepare them to write a successful topical and dissertation. A secondary reason is that many students with interests in PPE or AO have mistakenly thought that writing a QP on an PPE or AO topic would be a bad idea for some reason. This policy serves to correct that misperception.

8.8.7 QP stats: During the 12 to 15 years that the dept. has had the QP requirement, at least two second-year students typically receive revise-and-resubmit verdicts on their first-round submissions and at least one typically fails to pass on the second-round and is dismissed from the Ph.D. program.

8.9 Mid-program M.A.: Ph.D. students may apply to receive an M.A. degree along the way to earning their Ph.D. Students who are in good standing, successfully complete 30 credits, and pass their QPs by the end of their second year are entitled to receive an M.A. on that basis. For administrative purposes, a QP that was awarded an A grade can be used (as is) as an M.A. project. Most colleges and universities require adjunct instructors to possess an M.A. degree, so it can be useful to have the M.A. Another benefit of obtaining the M.A. along the way is that unforeseen events may force a student to leave the Ph.D. program before completing their degree. Obtaining an M.A. along the way ensures that students will not leave the program empty-handed.

8.10 Applied ontology track: Applied ontologists are needed by private industry, governments, non-profit organizations, and other institutions to develop and manage large databases and directories, to model and analyze complex structures and processes, and to build systems for data and enterprise integration. Students interested in this field who wish to acquire a background in the theory and practice of applied ontology may pursue the applied ontology (AO) track within the Ph.D. program. This interdisciplinary program allows students to work with relevant faculty in computer science and engineering, geography, biomedical informatics, linguistics, and the life sciences. In addition to completing the general requirements that all Ph.D. students in PHI must complete, except for the Teaching PHI course requirement, students pursuing the AO track within the Ph.D. in philosophy program will also complete the following AO requirements.

8.10.1 Advising: Each AO track student must have a core AO faculty member as their advisor. AO track students must receive advisor approval before registering for any course that will count toward completion of the AO track.

8.10.2 Required courses: AO track students must take the following AO courses.

- PHI 517 – Introduction to Logic for Advanced Students
- PHI 530 – Ontological Engineering
- PHI 531 – Problems in Ontology
- PHI 598 – Applied Ontology Seminar
- PHI 616 – Logic for Ontologies

8.10.3 Electives: AO track students must complete at least 3 courses from the following list of approved elective courses. Students can substitute courses that are not listed below to satisfy the elective requirement only with the approval of their advisor.

- PHI 520 – Philosophy of Science
- PHI 547 – Formal Ontology
- PHI 548 – Ontology for Data Science

PHI 549 – Applied Ontology
 PHI 550 – Spatial Ontology
 PHI 634 – Topics in Metaphysics & Epistemology
 PHI 650 – Ontology of Society
 BMI 501 – Survey of Biomedical Informatics
 BMI 508 – Biomedical Ontology
 BMI 521 – Logic Programming for Biomedical Informatics
 BMI 708– Advanced Topics in Biomedical Ontology
 LIN 567 – Computational Linguistics
 MGS 596 – NLP in Management Research
 MGS 628 – Data Visualization
 MGS 655 – Distributed Computing and Big Data Technologies
 MGS 660 – Big Data Information Management
 URP 569 – GIS Applications
 GEO 511 – Spatial Data Science
 GEO 595 – Database Design for GIS
 CSE 542 – Software Engineering Concepts
 CSE 560 – Data Models and Query Languages
 CSE 562 – Database Systems
 CSE 563 – Knowledge Representation

8.10.4 Research groups: AO track students are required to participate in regularly scheduled AO Zoom meetings, working groups, and research project teams under the direction of their advisor.

8.10.5 Qualifying papers: AO students should submit a QP on an AO topic.

8.10.6 Dissertation: AO students write topical and dissertations on AO topics.

8.11. Dissertations

8.11.1 Dissertation format: The default expectation is that dissertations should be written as collections of approximately four thematically related chapters (not including a brief introduction or conclusion) that can be published as stand-alone articles and not written as books whose parts that only make sense within the context of a larger whole. The article rather than the book has been the primary unit of publication within philosophy for quite some time. For basically every student, you should not try to write a dissertation as a book and then plan to rework your chapters into articles after your degree is finished. The chapters of your dissertation should be thematically related and written within a single area of specialization. In basically every case, students should not attempt to write one chapter within the area of, say, bioethics, another in PPE, and another in AO. This will spread your expertise out too thinly and prevent you from becoming a fully knowledgeable expert in any AOS. It will also almost assuredly prevent you from completing your dissertation on time.

8.11.2 Dissertation committee: A committee consists of at least three members. The chair of the committee must be a faculty member in the UB Philosophy Department. The remaining two members must come from UB but can be from outside the philosophy department. Including non-philosophy faculty on one's committee requires approval of the committee chair. Students interested in having an outside reviewer are advised to cultivate a relationship with the professor in question

long before making the request. Requests for outside readers must be approved ahead of time by the committee chair and DGS.

No faculty member is required to serve on any student's committee. A student who cannot get three members to serve on the committee will no longer be in good standing (see §10). Faculty members are sometimes averse to being on a committee of a student whom they have never had in a class, so it is wise to cultivate relationships with professors in anticipation of including them on dissertations committees.

8.11.3 The topical: Before officially beginning to write a dissertation, students must submit a topical (sometimes known as a topical paper) and pass a topical defense. The topical is a written proposal that describes the dissertation project, is typically around 5,000 words long, and may consist of a proposed table of contents, a general overview of the project, brief sketches of the chapters to be written, and an extensive bibliography for the dissertation. Students are encouraged to select an area of specialization within philosophy as early in the program as possible so that they can begin to acquire as much knowledge and understanding of that AOS and thereby prepare themselves to write a strong topical when the time comes.

Each third-year student should conduct an independent study with their dissertation advisor to prepare for the topical. This course should involve reading widely in the subject matter to develop an area of expertise and bibliography for the dissertation. A decent draft of the topical, though not necessarily the final draft, should ideally result from the course.

Initial drafts of a topical will be submitted to a student's dissertation advisor for feedback and revised in light of that feedback. When the student's advisor determines that the topical is sufficiently strong to be shared with other members of the dissertation committee, their feedback will also be sought. Topicals almost always go through multiple drafts before they are ready for defense.

8.11.4 The topical defense: The committee chair, together with other dissertation committee members, will inform the student when the topical is ready to be defended. After receiving permission to defend a final draft of the topical, students should submit two hard copies to the graduate administrator which will be made available to interested parties. The student and the committee will agree on a time to schedule the defense, and the department will be notified of the defense at least two weeks in advance of the scheduled topical defense date.

At the defense, the student will typically give a brief presentation of the general topic, motivation, and approach of the proposed dissertation. The length of the presentation will be determined by the dissertation chair. This will be followed by a series of questions from the committee and any other faculty present, then from the audience. The purpose of the defense is to ascertain that (a) the topic is professionally acceptable and that the proposed essay if completed would be an acceptable dissertation and (b) that the student is fully qualified to complete the proposed work. The student's topical must be unanimously passed by the committee to count as having passed.

If, during the course of working on their dissertation, the subject area of a student's doctoral thesis changes dramatically, a new topical defense will be required. If, for example, a student begins working on a dissertation in the history of early modern philosophy but decides to pursue applied ontology instead, they must write and defend a new topical. If the topic of a student's dissertation

within a given subject area changes dramatically, a new topical may also be required. In addition, a change in dissertation chairs may require a new topical defense, at the discretion of the new chair.

8.11.5 Dissertation guidance credits: Each student may sign up for at most 12 credit-hours of dissertation guidance.

8.11.6 Topical and dissertation timelines: Students should aim to defend their topicals halfway through their fourth year in the program. Students who do not pass their topical defenses by the end of their fourth year will automatically lose good standing – i.e., they will be placed on probation. There must be at least a one-year interval between a successful topical defense and a scheduled dissertation defense. There must be at least a six-week interval between the submission of the penultimate draft of the dissertation and a scheduled dissertation defense.

8.11.7 The dissertation defense: Each student must complete and defend a dissertation before receiving a Ph.D. Steps taken toward defending a dissertation include the following.

- The student will write the dissertation primarily under the advisement of their dissertation committee chair.
- Once the chair of the dissertation committee is satisfied with the dissertation as a whole or with particular chapters within it, the student will submit the dissertation to the remaining members of their committee. These committee members will provide additional comments and feedback on the student’s dissertation material, and the student will revise it in light of this feedback.
- Technically, the required minimum amount of time in between a dissertation defense and the distribution of a final draft of the dissertation to the other members of the committee is six weeks. However, students should never allow this little time. The other committee members are not merely window dressing. They serve on your committee to provide guidance and feedback on your dissertation and must be provided with sufficient time to read and comment on your dissertation. And you must allow sufficient time for you to revise your dissertation in light of their comments.
- After all members of the committee approve the dissertation, the student may proceed to a public defense of the dissertation. The student and the committee will agree upon a time to schedule the defense, and the department will be notified of the defense at least two weeks in advance of the scheduled dissertation defense date. After scheduling the dissertation defense, the student will supply an electronic copy of the dissertation to the graduate administrator, who will make either it, or hard copies of it, available to interested parties.
- At the defense, the student will typically begin by giving a brief overview of the dissertation, including its main arguments, motivations, claims, and original contributions. The length of the presentation will be determined by the dissertation chair. This is followed by an examination of the content of the dissertation, in the form of a series of questions from members of the dissertation committee. After committee members have finished asking their questions, other faculty members present can also ask questions, and then members of the audience can as well.
- After the question period of the defense is concluded, everyone present at the defense, except for the dissertation committee, will be asked to leave the room so that the committee can deliberate and determine whether the student has successfully passed their defense. A student will pass the dissertation defense if and only if every member of the dissertation committee judges that both the dissertation and the public examination are acceptable. The committee may require revisions in the dissertation after the defense before it receives final

approval. Once the committee has had sufficient time to deliberate, the student will be invited back into the room and informed of their verdict.

—Other graduate students, family members, and friends are welcome to attend the dissertation defense. It is ideal if they can hang around until after the dissertation committee has completed its deliberation, so that they can be present to congratulate the student on a successful defense.

—A dissertation defense is not a gauntlet or a blood sport, although it might have seemed that way to some once upon a time. The norm is that dissertation advisors and committee members should not permit dissertation defenses to be scheduled unless everything with the dissertation is already in order.

All or almost all faculty are 10-month employees, and many are unavailable during the summer months for defenses. Thus, students should aim to have all defenses scheduled during the school year.

8.11 Satisfactory progress in the Ph.D. program: All Ph.D. students must maintain a 3.2 GPA or higher to remain in the program; funded students must maintain a 3.5 GPA or higher or may lose their funding. (See §10.3 below for details). Making satisfactory progress through the program as a full-time Ph.D. student requires meeting the following benchmarks during or before the year for which they are listed.

First year:

- Satisfy the symbolic logic requirement.
- Complete some of the seminar breadth requirements.
- Obtain a B or better in the intensive writing seminar.
- Pass Teaching philosophy (604), if offered.
- Complete 18 credits of work if full-time and funded (or 24 credits if full-time and unfunded).

Second year:

- Aim to complete seminar breadth requirements with a B or above.
- Pass the qualifying paper requirement.

Third year:

- Finish remaining seminar breadth and course requirements.
- Complete 45 philosophy seminar credits.
- Complete topical preparation independent study with dissertation advisor.

Fourth year:

- Assemble a dissertation committee.
- Defend topical. Students who do not defend their topicals by the end of their fourth year* will be placed on probation.

Fifth year:

- Provide dissertation committee with at least half of the chapters of the dissertation.

Sixth year:

- Defend dissertation.
- Students who do not defend their dissertations by the end of their sixth year* will be put on probation.
- Students who do not defend their topicals by the end of the fall semester of their sixth year* will be dismissed from the Ph.D. program.

Seventh year:

—Students who do not complete their dissertations by the end of their seventh year* will be dismissed from the program.

Note: Throughout this document, terms such as ‘second year,’ ‘third year,’ etc. refer to benchmarks or deadlines for students pursuing full-time graduate work. Appropriate part-time equivalents will be substituted for students pursuing part-time graduate work at different paces.

8.12 University dissertation guidelines, deadlines, and forms: The student is expected to file for candidacy at the end of six semesters. Filing earlier is desirable, if possible. Two weeks are needed to obtain the required signatures and for the administration to process the forms.

9. GRADUATE INSTRUCTORS, TEACHING ASSISTANTS, AND RESEARCH ASSISTANTS

9.1 TA/RA assignments: The DGS will assign students on departmental assistantships to serve as TAs or RAs a few weeks before classes begin.

9.2 TA duties

9.2.1 Contracted hours: Ph.D. students who receive assistantships as part of their funding packages are contracted to work up to 20 hours per week. Sometimes students feel they are being treated unfairly when they are asked to work 7 hours per week. The total number of contracted hours should be kept in mind when considering what counts as fair or unfair treatment.

9.2.2 Preparing for the semester: All incoming, funded Ph.D. students must attend the Graduate School’s TA orientation and the departmental orientation that is held the Friday before fall classes begin. All TAs and RAs must contact the instructor that they will be assisting in the upcoming term, soon after being notified by the DGS of their TA or RA assignments and well before the first day of class. Failure to contact the instructor well before the first day of class will put the student in danger of being replaced, losing funding, or being placed on probation .

9.2.3 Course meetings:

—All TAs must attend all class meetings, unless the instructor excuses them from doing so. In case of illness, emergency, or other good reasons to miss class, TAs must notify the instructor as far in advance as possible.

—All TAs should arrive a few minutes before class begins, so as to be available to help instructors with pre-class tasks, and to set a good example to undergraduate students. TAs should never arrive late.

—During class, TAs must assist with classroom activities and management, both during and immediately after class periods. Examples of such help include picking up homework assignments and exams, distributing handouts, monitoring small group discussions, helping to erase the board after class, and fielding students’ questions after class. TAs should not bolt out of the classroom as soon as class is dismissed.

—TAs should discuss expectations about their in-class contributions to class sessions with their instructor. For example, TAs should ask the instructor whether they should offer comments or examples during class that they think may be helpful. It is most common that TAs are asked not to participate in class discussion.

—TAs must lead review sessions, or question and answer sessions, outside of regular class hours, if their instructors wish them to do so.

—TAs must guest lecture, if the instructor wishes them to do so. Instructors may require TAs to take over class if they are ill or traveling to out-of-town meetings.

—If a TA would like to lecture or lead a discussion during the semester, the TA should let the instructor know. Such opportunities are not guaranteed, but they are common. Lecturing or leading a class can be an important opportunity for TAs to receive feedback on their current teaching skills and may help them to prepare for the job market.

9.2.4 Grading:

—TAs must complete all grading in a timely manner. TAs should ask instructors for deadlines to complete grading of particular assignments.

—TAs must provide comments on tests, papers, and other relevant assessments, if the instructor wishes them to do so. TAs should discuss the types of feedback their instructors wish them to give to students. For example, some instructors may wish TAs to avoid negative comments and some may wish to emphasize the use of explanatory and constructive feedback.

—TAs must follow all rubrics and other guides to grading (such as rules for point assignments) given to them by the instructor. If the instructor does not provide such guidance, the TA should ask the instructor for guidance.

—TAs should not leave town or otherwise become unavailable at the end of the semester before the instructor has submitted grades for the course, unless the instructor gives them permission to do so.

—TAs must be available for contact between semesters to deal with any grading issues that may have arisen at the conclusion of the previous semester.

—TAs may need to be available after the semester ends to grade any assessments needed to resolve incompletes.

—TAs must give all unreturned assessments (e.g., papers and exams) to the instructor.

9.2.5 Office hours:

—TAs must schedule office hours for two hours per week. They should coordinate their office hours with those of the instructor and other TAs for the course (if any), if the instructor wishes.

—TAs should make reasonable efforts to make special appointments to meet students who cannot attend their office hours.

—TAs should be available during all of their scheduled office hours, unless (a) they are ill or have an emergency, or (b) they have the instructor's permission to change their office hours for that day or week.

9.2.6 Email communications:

—TAs must reply to (or at least acknowledge receipt of) all student emails promptly, ideally within 24 hours. They should discuss with their instructors whether they wish to be copied on all emails with students, or to be copied only on grade-related emails, or only on emails that require their direct attention or response.

—TAs must respond to all emails from their instructors promptly, ideally within 24 hours.

9.2.7 Performance expectations: TA performance issues (including, but not limited to, arriving late for lectures or exams, writing insufficient comments on papers, unexcused absences, etc.) may lead to loss of TA-ships and funding.

9.3 Make-up exam policy: It is the TA's responsibility to schedule and proctor make-up exams for their students. This duty falls within the 20 hours per week on average that can be imposed on TAs. In the case of an emergency, where the TA cannot proctor the exam, the TA should arrange for a fellow graduate student to proctor the exam. Exams must be printed out by the TA with detailed instructions, including the student's name, instructor's name, course number, length of exam, and whether it is an open or closed book.

9.4 Graduate students as full instructors: It used to be common for graduate students to serve as full instructors (and not mere TAs) for undergraduate courses offered at UB during the fall and spring semesters. However, with recent and significant decreases in undergraduate enrollment demand, and increases in faculty numbers, this has become much less common. The DGS will notify students which classes are available for teaching as full instructor and invite applications from students on assistantships. Applicants must have taken Teaching philosophy (PHI 604) and worked as a TA before they will be eligible to teach such a course. (When necessary the DGS may waive this requirement.) Students applying for instructor positions are to supply a proposed syllabus for the courses they are applying to teach, plus an up-to-date cv. Courses that most often require Graduate student instructors are PHI 101 (Introduction to philosophy), PHI 105 (Contemporary moral problems), PHI 107 (Ethics), PHI 115 (Critical thinking), and PHI 237 (Medical ethics). See section 3.6 for information about graduate students' teaching their own courses during the winter and summer sessions.

9.5 Classroom visits: When graduate students are teaching their own courses during the fall and spring semesters, faculty members of the teaching quality committee will visit their class once a semester to observe their teaching. The teaching committee will give the students notice when they will be observed in the classroom. The faculty will provide the student instructor with recommendations for improvement and will prepare a written assessment that will be given to both the student and the DGS.

9.6 Syllabi: Graduate students who are teaching their own courses must clear their syllabi with the DGS well before the relevant term begins and make it available to all students on the first day of the term at the latest but preferably a week beforehand. Syllabi must be constructed in accord with UB's [syllabi guidelines](#).

10. GOOD STANDING AND STUDENT REVIEWS

10.1 Semi-annual student reviews: The PHI Dept.'s Progress and Evaluation committee consists of faculty members who meet twice a year to perform reviews of all graduate students. At the end of each spring semester, a meeting of all faculty is held to discuss the progress and performance of all graduate students and to address any issues or problems. After this meeting, every Ph.D. student receives a letter from the Progress and Evaluation committee summarizing faculty assessment of their progress and performance. At the end of every fall semester, letters are sent to every first-year student; every student who is being placed on probation, currently on probation, or going off of probation; every student who had a significant performance failure in the previous semester; and any student who needs a nudge to perform better in some respects. Letters will inform students of what measures must be taken in order to restore their good standing if they are on probation or what they need to do to improve their performance in some other respect.

10.2 Good standing and probation: A loss of good standing means that the student no longer has a right to any of the privileges of being a member of the department. This could mean anything from the most severe measure of being dropped from the program or losing funding, to receiving a probationary letter from the Progress and Evaluation Committee, outlining what the student needs to do to be restored to good standing. In some egregious cases, for example plagiarism, students will lose good standing and be expelled without being put on probation. Most cases involving the loss of good standing will result in a letter the following semester from the Progress and Evaluation Committee informing the student what must be done to restore good standing. **Students can lose their good standing without having received a letter.**

Common causes for loss of good standing include the following.

(i) Failing to maintain minimum GPA: All students must maintain a cumulative GPA of 3.2 or above to remain in the program. Any student who drops below the minimum GPA will automatically lose good standing and be on probation, prior to the Progress and Evaluation Committee sending a probationary letter. Funded Ph.D. students must maintain a 3.5 GPA each semester to retain funding.

(ii) 3 incompletes: Students automatically lose their good standing if they have three incompletes at the same time. They are automatically on probation prior to the Progress and Evaluation Committee sending a probationary letter. Students on probation for having 3 incompletes will be dismissed from the program if they accumulate additional incompletes while on probation (unless the Progress and Evaluation Committee rules that there are extenuating circumstances). The letter from the Progress and Evaluation Committee may include an upper limit on any future incompletes after the probationary semester.

(iii) U grade for incompletes: Unresolved incompletes convert to U grades after one year. Any student with such a U grade automatically loses good standing and is on probation prior to the Progress and Evaluation Committee sending a probationary letter. Any student with a U for an incomplete will be dismissed from the program if they receive another U in the following semester (unless the Progress and Evaluation Committee rules that there are extenuating circumstances). U grades for incompletes in later semesters constitute adequate grounds for dismissal from the program, at the discretion of the Progress and Evaluation Committee.

(iv) Failure to perform TA/RA duties adequately: Failure to perform TA and RA duties adequately will result in a loss of good standing. In such cases, measures taken may include reassignment, loss of opportunity to teach a course, suspension or revocation of an assistantship, or dismissal from the Ph.D. program. If the failing is egregious, penalties will be immediately enacted.

(v) Failure to make satisfactory progress: Students who fail to make satisfactory progress through their graduate program will lose their good standing and will be sent a probationary letter. For what counts as satisfactory progress, see §7.9 for M.A. and §8.11 for Ph.D.

(vi) Failure to consult with advisor prior to registration: All students must contact their advisors to discuss their course registration prior to the start of each term. Meetings can be

conducted via email, if necessary. This rule holds for every semester the student is in the department.

Note: Throughout this document, terms such as ‘second year,’ ‘third year,’ etc. refer to benchmarks or deadlines for students pursuing full-time graduate work. Appropriate part-time equivalents will be substituted for students pursuing part-time graduate work at different paces.

10.3. Academic probation due to low grades

10.3.1 Probation for failure to maintain minimum department GPA: Students who fail to maintain a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.2 will automatically be on probation without prior notification from the Progress and Evaluation committee.

When a student’s cumulative GPA is below a 3.2, it must be restored to a 3.2 or above by the end of the following semester. If this is mathematically impossible or close to impossible, then one must obtain a *semester only* GPA of 3.2 or above. That is, a minimum 3 courses taken when on probation must receive grades that average 3.2 or above. The Progress and Evaluation committee will determine what counts as ‘close to impossible.’

When on probation for falling below the required minimum GPA, students may not take any courses outside the philosophy department without permission of the DGS, and they may not request or receive incompletes. Exceptions can be made with the approval of the both the course instructor and the DGS. The department expects funded students to raise their GPA without relying upon a reduced workload and additional time to complete seminar papers.

When on probation for falling below the required minimum GPA, students must take three seminar courses for letter grades, unless given permission by the DGS and are not allowed to take any independent studies without the permission of the DGS.

10.3.2 Failure to maintain minimum GPA to retain funding: Students who receive tuition scholarships and assistantships must maintain a 3.5 minimum GPA each semester in order to remain funded. If their GPA falls below a semester-only 3.5, they will automatically be placed on probation without prior notification from the Progress and Evaluation Committee. The student is given one semester to improve their grades in order to retain their funding.

Any student with two consecutive semesters with a semester-only GPA below 3.5 in each will automatically lose their funding. Any student with two non-consecutive semesters with a semester-only GPA below 3.5 in each will retain their funding only at the discretion of the Progress and Evaluation committee.

When on probation for falling below the required minimum GPA for funding, students are prohibited from requesting or receiving incompletes. Exceptions can only be made with the approval of the course instructor and the DGS. The department expects funded students to raise their GPA without relying upon a reduced workload and additional time to complete seminar papers.

When on probation for falling below the required minimum GPA for funding, students may not take any courses outside the philosophy department without permission of the DGS. They must

take three seminar courses for letter grades, unless given permission by the DGS, and they are not allowed to take any independent studies without the permission of the DGS.

10.4 Grievance procedures: Grievance procedures are outlined in the Graduate School Policies and Procedures [policy library](#).

11. DEPARTMENTAL CITIZENSHIP

11.1 Attendance at colloquia and UB conferences: Students should attend all department-wide colloquia and conferences. A distinction is made between department-wide events and events that are organized only by a subgroup of the department. Students within a subgroup or specialization (e.g., AO or PPE) should attempt events organized by members of that group. Attendance at these events is an important part of graduate education. It allows students to see how to give talks, get some practice asking questions about talks, discover what are the cutting edge issues which would make good dissertation topics, meet prominent philosophers who could be outside dissertation readers, and to support the department by helping to make invited speakers feel welcome.

11.2 Department citizenship: The Chair and DGS will consider department citizenship when considering the provision of funding for conference and workshop travel, assigning instructors to courses, providing an extra year of funding, and when making recommendations for adjunct positions at local schools.

12. DEPARTMENTAL AWARDS

12.1 Peter Hare award for best overall paper: A cash prize is awarded to the best graduate paper in any field but ethics. Any paper or “stand alone” dissertation chapter written by a UB philosophy graduate student and completed during the previous academic year is eligible for nomination. Nominations are made by faculty. Papers co-authored by UB graduate students are eligible, but the prize money will be split rather than doubled. Papers co-authored with a faculty member are not eligible. The department reserves the right not to bestow an award some years and to provide less prize money when funding is limited.

Peter H. Hare, Ph.D., was a UB Distinguished Service Professor. One could say he is still serving the department posthumously through his generosity toward the department. Through his writings and teachings, Hare left an indelible impact upon the history of American philosophy, having helped to draw the works of Charles Peirce, George H. Mead, William James, Alfred North Whitehead and John Dewey into central positions in international philosophy. Hare was the former president of several professional associations, including the New York State Chapter of the American Philosophical Association (1975-77), the Charles Sanders Peirce Society (1976), the William James Society (2006) and, from 1988-90, the Society for the Advancement of American Philosophy). He served as the editor of the journal of the Charles Sanders Peirce Society starting in 1974. He was very active in the American Philosophical Association where he held several positions, including member of the Board of Officers (1996-99) and ombudsman (1996-99). Colleagues called him “a man of inextinguishable pragmatism, optimism, kindness, enthusiasm, generosity and energy” and say that he will be remembered “with great affection and respect by students, fellow philosophers and people of every walk of life, from Poland and Russia, to South America to Buffalo.” Hare was

born in 1935 in New York City, the son of the late Jane Perry and Michael Meredith. He and began his life-long relationship with philosophy while an undergraduate at Yale University. His master's degree thesis on Whitehead remains an exemplar of multi-disciplinary integration. He earned a doctorate in philosophy at Columbia University where he specialized in Mead's metaphysics. He joined the UB Philosophy Department in 1965, was appointed full professor in 1971, and served as chair from 1971-75 and again from 1985-94. He passed away in 2008.

12.2 Peter Hare department citizenship award: A cash prize is awarded to the graduate student deemed the best department citizen. Nominations are made by faculty and staff. Examples of outstanding departmental citizenship include the following.

- Attends and participates in departmental events (e.g., the Baumer colloquium series, Hourani lectures, Hourani and Kurtz lecture working lunches, Hourani reading groups)
- Assists in the organization of graduate or faculty department conferences
- Gives and attends lunchtime philosophy talks
- Volunteers to help out with undergraduate education by participating in the undergraduate philosophy club, the ethics bowl, and mentoring undergraduates
- Suggests ways to improve life in the department to faculty or staff
- Aids the staff in their duties
- Volunteers to meet with or communicate with prospective grad students
- Actively participates in classes as a non-credit student and makes those classes more successful than they would otherwise have been
- Promotes the department to prospective undergraduate majors and grad students
- Serves the greater university in some capacity as a philosophy department representative
- Is active as a representative of the philosophy department in interdisciplinary programs and attends related talks

12.3 George Hourani award for best paper in ethics: A cash prize is awarded to the best graduate paper in ethics. Any paper or stand-alone dissertation chapter written by a UB philosophy graduate student and completed during the past academic year is eligible for nomination. Nominations are made by faculty. Papers co-authored by UB graduate students are eligible, but the prize money will be divided among the authors. Papers co-authored with a faculty member are not eligible. The department reserves the right not to bestow an award some years and to provide less prize money when funding is limited.

George Hourani was a long time UB philosophy professor. Hourani won a fellowship to study classics at Oxford from 1932-1936. He continued his graduate studies in Princeton's Department of Oriental Studies in 1937. Hourani received his Ph.D. in 1939. A teaching position as lecturer at the Government Arab College in Jerusalem followed where he began teaching classics, logic, and the history of philosophy. Hourani spent 1948-49 writing the first draft of his book *Ethical Value* under the guidance of the philosopher J.P. Mabbott. The book rejected non-naturalism and intuitionism in ethics and was inspired by utilitarianism. Hourani is responsible for definitive Arabic editions and translations of Ibn Rushid, better known to philosophers as Averroes – an Islamic philosopher renowned for his commentaries on Aristotle. Hourani also translated and wrote the notes for *Harmony of Religion and Philosophy* by Averroes. He joined the department in 1967 and was the chair of the department from 1976-1979. Oxford University Press published his *Islamic Rationalism: The Ethics of Ab dal Jabbar* in 1971. In 1980 he was promoted to the rank of Distinguished Professor. A festschrift

in his honor, *Islamic Theology and Philosophy*, was published in 1984 by SUNY Press. He died in 1984.

12.4 Patrick and Edna Romanell award for philosophical work in naturalism: A cash prize is awarded to the best piece of graduate work in naturalism (broadly construed). Any paper or dissertation written by a UB philosophy graduate student and completed during the past academic year is eligible for nomination. Nominations are made by faculty.

Papers co-authored by UB graduate students are eligible, but the prize money will be split rather than doubled. Papers co-authored with a faculty member are not eligible. The department reserves the right not to bestow an award some years and to provide less prize money when funding is limited.

Patrick Romanell was a philosopher and author of several books on critical naturalism. His wife, **Edna**, a former medical social worker, says that she and her husband shared the same thoughts on giving. "If we can afford it, let someone else benefit, too," she says. "You only live so long, and our philosophy was always to let somebody else profit, as well." Patrick Romanell died of cancer in February 2002, but his generosity continues to benefit the university.

12.5 Thomas Perry dissertation award: Awarded to the best dissertation defended in the previous year.

Thomas D. Perry was born in St. Paul, Minnesota in 1924. A graduate of the University at Buffalo's Law School, Dr. Perry served as a legal counselor to Congress and later, Bell Aerospace Corporation. He attended Columbia University, earning a Ph.D. in Philosophy in 1966. Thereafter he taught Philosophy at the University at Buffalo, where he was active in department affairs, including assisting in the development of the University's Philosophy and Law joint degree program. Dr. Perry was particularly interested in moral reasoning and legal philosophy. He published many works in such distinguished journals as *Ethics*, *The Journal of Philosophy*, and *Analysis*, as well as a book on philosophy, *Moral Autonomy and Reasonableness*. Dr. Perry had two works published posthumously in 1985, *Professional Philosophy: What It Is and Why It Matters*, and the article, "Two Domains of Rights." He died in 1982 at the young age of 58.

12.6 Outstanding TA or RA award: Each year a student is recognized for being an outstanding teaching assistant or research assistant.

12.7 Outstanding graduate instructor award: In the past, when graduate students were teaching their own courses during the fall and spring semesters on a regular basis, one graduate student per year was recognized for being an outstanding graduate student instructor. More recently, however, the College of Arts & Sciences has experienced major changes in undergraduate enrollment that have resulted in graduate students not teaching during the regular academic year. Graduate students have been teaching online, usually asynchronously, during the summer and winter sessions, but since it is more difficult to observe all graduate student teaching during this time, the award has temporarily been placed on hold.