



Philosophy Graduate Program Doctoral Candidacy Requirements

The University of Calgary [Graduate Candidacy Regulations](#) (“the Regulations”) govern the conduct of admission to graduate candidacy at the University of Calgary. This document establishes program specific requirements associated with the conduct of admission to graduate candidacy under the Regulations.

A. Statement of Purpose

A student admitted into candidacy in the Philosophy PhD program should have: (1) a solid foundation in philosophy generally as well as in the student’s particular area of research; (2) a well-developed thesis proposal; and (3) the necessary skills and background preparation to successfully complete the proposed research.

B. Candidacy Components

All doctoral students in the Philosophy Graduate Program must successfully complete the following components:

- All course requirements as indicated in the [Philosophy program description](#) in the FGS Calendar, including, if applicable, the Logic Requirement
- Three Field of Study Examinations
- Thesis Proposal and Thesis Proposal Oral Examination

Suggested Timeline

Philosophy Ph.D. students should aim to complete their Candidacy Requirements according to the following timeline.

- Course requirements: in the first two regular semesters in the program, i.e., by the end of April of their first academic year. If required, Phil 379 (Logic II) should be taken by the second semester in program.
- Field of Study examinations: by 18 months in the program (e.g., end of February of their second year).

- Thesis Proposal and Thesis Proposal Oral Examination: by 21 months in the program (e.g., end of May of their second year).

This timeline is a suggested guideline only; official deadlines for candidacy components are given below. It assumes admission with an MA degree and first registration in September, and should be adjusted accordingly for students admitted without an MA or who enter the program in January.

According to the Regulations, subject to any extension allowances, PhD students must complete all candidacy requirements within 28 months of first registration. Those students who have transferred from a Master's program must complete all candidacy requirements within 36 months of the first registration in that Master's program.

C. Field of Study Examinations

PhD students must pass the three written departmental Field of Study (FoS) examinations prior to their Thesis Proposal Oral Examination and within 20 months of first registration. The FoS examinations are intended to test the student's knowledge of, and competence to work in, their chosen areas of philosophy. Students are expected to show understanding of the central positions and important lines of debate in the chosen area, and to demonstrate general intellectual and philosophical ability at the PhD level.

Students must write and pass the FoS examinations in three of the following four major areas of Philosophy:

1. Metaphysics and Epistemology:
 - a. Metaphysics
 - b. Epistemology
 - c. Philosophy of Mind
 - d. Philosophy of Science
2. Moral and Political Philosophy:
 - a. Ethics
 - b. Political Philosophy
3. Philosophy of Language and Logic:
 - a. Philosophy of Language
 - b. Philosophy of Logic
4. History of Philosophy:
 - a. Plato and Aristotle
 - b. 12th Century to 14th Century Medieval
 - c. Early Modern
 - d. Late Modern

For the first three areas, a student chooses one subarea for examination. For the History of Philosophy area, the student chooses two subareas for examination. For at most two areas, a student may submit a research paper in lieu of a written exam.

C.1. Composition of Area Field of Study Examination Committees

There is a standing FoS examination committee for each of the four examination areas. All exam answers and papers are evaluated by the appropriate area FoS examination committee. Each committee consists of three members, including a chair. All committee members vote. The Department Head (in consultation with the Graduate Program Director) appoints area FoS examination committees and selects a chair for each.

C.2. Scheduling of Field of Study Examinations

For each FoS examination, the student may choose one of the following:

1. A 3-hour on-site, closed-book exam
2. A 72-hour take-home, open-book exam
3. A research paper

At least one FoS examination must be taken as a 3-hour or 72-hour exam. Specific rules for submitting a research paper as an FoS examination answer are given below.

FoS exams are offered at least four times per academic year. Specific dates for a given academic year will be announced on the department website by May 1 of the preceding academic year. Students have the option of writing one or more exams during any of the scheduled exam periods.

Students must inform the Graduate Program Administrator of their intention to sit a 3-hour or 72-hour exam, and their chosen subarea(s), two weeks in advance of a given date.

C.3. Format and Process of Field of Study Examinations

Each FoS examination subarea covers a set bibliography. These bibliographies are reviewed by the respective area examination committee every two years. Changes, if any, are announced by the first day of Fall term and will be effective for examinations administered beginning the following Winter term. Bibliographies, as well as sample questions, are available from the Department's Graduate Office and online [at the Department's website](#). FoS examination questions cover the literature contained in these bibliographies.

For each exam, the area FoS examination committee sets six questions, of which the student must answer two. Given the breadth of the History of Philosophy field, the committee sets six questions per subarea for a History of Philosophy exam, and the student must answer one for each subarea.

For a 3-hour exam, an answer to each of the two questions chosen is expected to range between 3 and 6 handwritten pages (between 600 and 1,200 words). Since it is a closed-book exam, it is not expected that the student cite or bring to bear literature not on the reading list. Direct quotations and full bibliographic references are not required.

For a 72-hour exam, answers are expected to be typed, proofread, and formatted as a term paper would be. The exposition and argument should be supported with pertinent quotations, if appropriate, and a list of references is required in standard bibliographic format. Answers should range between 6 and 14 pages (between 1,500 and 3,500 words), excluding bibliography).

A student may choose to submit a research paper as a FoS examination answer.

1. Students should consult with the respective area committee between 2 and 4 months before the date on which they plan to submit a paper. The paper's topic must be submitted for approval to the chair of the relevant examination committee at least seven weeks before the proposed examination date, and approved by the committee not less than six weeks before the exam. In order to be approved, all area FoS committee members must approve it.
2. Because the FoS examination requirement is intended to ascertain whether students have broad knowledge of the examination area, the topic of the paper should not be overly narrow. A paper, as opposed to the 72-hour and 3-hour examinations, must also demonstrate ability to research a specific topic in depth. The literature taken into account should be current. The submission should exhibit both the ability to explain or summarize clearly a problem, issue, or subject, and the ability to engage critically with it. Mere literature surveys are unacceptable.
3. It is permitted to re-use material from papers previously submitted to satisfy course requirements, however, at least half of the submitted paper must be new.
4. Notwithstanding (3), paper submission should surpass the typical graduate seminar papers in both depth and length, but should not exceed 10,000 words (approx. 40 double-spaced pages), excluding bibliography.
5. Papers submitted in satisfaction of a FoS examination requirement should be typed, double spaced, in 12-point font, be proofread for clarity, and free of spelling and grammatical errors.
6. Papers must be submitted by 4pm on the examination day to the Graduate Program Administrator, preferably by email. Late submissions will not be accepted.
7. A student can meet with members of the committee to discuss philosophical content in the relevant area. Committee members will not read or comment on draft papers, but

students are free to obtain feedback on their papers from anyone else before submitting it.

C.4. Evaluation of Field of Study Examinations

After a student submits a FoS examination answers or paper, the members of the responsible Area FoS Examination Committee will evaluate the submission, and communicate their evaluation of the submission to the Chair. If at least one committee member votes to fail a paper submission, or, in the case of 3- and 72-hour exams, at least one submitted answer, or if one of the members of the committee requests it, the Chair of the Area FoS Committee arranges a meeting of the committee to discuss the submission. At the end of the discussion in that meeting, the committee members again vote. For a research paper, the committee votes on whether the submission is a pass or fail. For 3-hour and 72-hour exams, the committee votes separately on each submitted answer. In order to pass, the majority (that is, 2 of 3) members of the committee must vote to pass. In order for a 3-hour or 72-hour exam to pass, both answers must pass. Otherwise, i.e., if the members are unanimously of the opinion that the submission is of passing quality, the submission passes, no meeting is required, and the deliberations of the committee end.

In order to pass, an answer must show the student's ability to (a) articulate, clearly and even-handedly, definitions of philosophical concepts, philosophical views and arguments relevant to the topic; (b) critically assess philosophical views and arguments; and (c) marshal philosophical criticisms and defenses of these criticisms at the PhD level.

For 72-hour take-home exams, in addition to criteria (a)-(c) given above, the committee will take into account the relevance and use made of additional literature not on the reading list the student chooses to discuss, as well as the structure and quality of writing of the answer.

The Chair of the Area FoS Examination Committee will inform the student and the Graduate Program Director immediately after the committee meeting, and in any case within three weeks of the exam submission, whether the student has passed. The FoS component of candidacy is completed when the student has passed three FoS exams. If the student has not passed, the committee will provide the student with written comments concerning the decision. If the committee does not make a decision within three weeks of the exam submission, the Graduate Program Director will ensure that the examination is assessed without further delay.

A student who fails a Field of Study examination in a given subarea will be allowed to re-take the examination after at least two and within six months of the failed examination. The second failure of a Field of Study examination in a subarea will result in a student being required to withdraw (see the Graduate Calendar, [Academic Regulations – Candidacy – Candidacy Examination Outcomes](#)).

C.4. Appeal of Failed Field of Study Examination

A student who fails a Field of Study examination may appeal directly to the Faculty of Graduate Studies (see the Graduate Calendar, [Academic Regulations](#) – Appeals – Appeals Against Faculty of Graduate Studies Rulings).

D. Thesis Proposal and Thesis Proposal Oral Examination

Thesis proposals must be examined before the end of the 28th month in the program, therefore PhD students are encouraged to begin work on their thesis proposal as early as possible. The thesis proposal must have a well-motivated research question and it should highlight the research's potential contribution to the philosophical literature. It should formulate the question, situate the question in the philosophical literature, formulate a plan for answering the question, and outline the proposed structure of the dissertation. The length of the Thesis Proposal will depend on the nature of the research; they are normally about 5,000 to 7,500 words (approximately 20 to 30 pages) not including the bibliography. The student should consult with the members of their Supervisory Committee when preparing the Thesis Proposal. The Thesis Proposal must be submitted to all members of the Thesis Proposal examination committee at least two weeks before the examination.

D.1 Composition of the Thesis Proposal Oral Examination Committee

The Thesis Proposal Examination Committee is composed of the student's Supervisory Committee and two other examiners. The two examiners not on the Supervisory Committee can be Philosophy Department faculty members, or one Philosophy Department member and one member of another department. The student's Supervisor will make the necessary arrangements for the composition of the Thesis Proposal Oral Examination and convey those arrangements to the Graduate Program Director. The Graduate Program Director shall ensure that no conflict of interest exists between the student or the Supervisor and the additional members of the examination committee. A Postdoctoral fellow whose Supervisor is on the Supervisory Committee may not serve on the examination committee (See [Graduate Studies Conflict of Interest Policy](#)). The Supervisor is a voting member of the Thesis Proposal Examination Committee.

The Graduate Program Director appoints a faculty member of the Philosophy Department as Neutral Chair of the Thesis Proposal Examination Committee. The Neutral Chair is not a member of the examining committee and is non-voting.

D.2 Scheduling of the Thesis Proposal Oral Examination

PhD students must take their Thesis Proposal Oral Examination within eight months of completion of their FoS examinations and within thirty days of submission of their Thesis Proposal to the Thesis Proposal Examination Committee. The student's Supervisor will propose

the date and time of the Thesis Proposal Oral Examination and, upon agreement with the student and Committee, will convey that information to the Graduate Program Director.

D.3 Thesis Proposal Oral Examination Process

Length of Examination

The examination should not exceed two hours. This does not include the deliberation time of the Examination Committee.

Closed Examination

Thesis proposal oral examinations are closed. Only the Examination Committee and the student examined may attend.

Examiners' Questioning

No one other than a member of the examination Committee is allowed to question the student. All examiners should be given an opportunity to question the student during the early part of the examination, e.g., by rounds of questioning.

Questions to the student should be clear and succinct. The student should be given reasonable time to answer. If the student has understood the question and cannot answer, the examiner should pass to another question and not attempt to extract an answer by prolonged interrogation, or by leading the student. The Chair should guard against any tendency of examiners to interact with each other instead of concentrating on the examination of the student.

The Neutral Chair must stop the exam if one of the examiners needs to leave the room and will reconvene the exam when all examiners are present.

Official Examiners' Discussion

At the end of the examination, the student is asked to withdraw from the room. Before any discussion of the student's performance, each examiner must identify which recommendation (pass/fail) they favour, separately for the thesis proposal and for the oral examination. This provides the Committee with a frame of opinion on which to base a discussion of the student's performance.

D.4 Outcomes of the Thesis Proposal Oral Examination

Approval of Thesis Proposal and Passing the Oral examination

Once the committee discussion is concluded, the committee votes on the written Thesis Proposal.

A vote of pass on the thesis proposal indicates that in the view of the Committee, the student has submitted a thesis proposal which: (1) articulates a clear and feasible research project or question; (2) has demonstrated knowledge of the context of the project topic by providing a competent and up-to-date literature review and (3) has been able to articulate a promising approach to addressing the research question.

If the Thesis Proposal passes, committee members vote on the performance of the student during the Thesis Proposal Oral Examination.

A vote of pass on the oral examination indicates that in the view of the Committee, the student has (1) answered questions about previous or competing contributions to the topic satisfactorily; (2) can clearly articulate the motivation and importance of the proposed research; and (3) has shown the ability to defend the proposed view or approach against objections or to formulate strategies for doing so.

Every effort should be made to reach a unanimous recommendation on either vote. Should the outcome of the final vote include one negative vote, the student will pass. When both the thesis proposal and oral examination are passed, the student has completed the Thesis Proposal and Thesis Proposal Oral Examination component of the candidacy requirements.

Failing the Thesis Proposal or Thesis Proposal Oral examination

Should the outcome of the vote on the thesis proposal or the oral examination include two or more negative votes, the Committee's recommendation to the Graduate Program Director for the respective component will be "fail". In the case of a fail,

- The Neutral Chair must inform the student of the Committee's recommendation immediately following the vote of the examination committee.
- The examiners write brief memos to the Graduate Program Director explaining the reasons for his/her vote and submit within five working days from the date of the examination.
- The Graduate Program Director may uphold the "fail" in the case of a clear fail or refer to FGS for decision in the case of an unclear fail. If the GPD upholds the "fail", after consultation with the Supervisor, the Graduate Program Director then summarizes the essential points from the memos to the student, copied to the Supervisor.
- The Graduate Program must send the Notice of a Failed Candidacy Component to the student within ten working days from the date of the examination.

D.6 Appeals

In the case of a fail, the student may appeal directly to the Faculty of Graduate Studies (see the Graduate Calendar, [Academic Regulations](#) – Appeals – Appeals Against Faculty of Graduate Studies Rulings).

D.7 Re-take of Examination

In the case of a failed Thesis Proposal, the student will be permitted to submit a revised Proposal, no sooner than two months and no later than six months from the date of the first examination. The revised thesis proposal will be re-examined according to the same rules.

In the case of a failed Thesis Proposal Oral Examination, the student will be permitted to re-take the exam. The re-take will be based on the same thesis proposal as the first exam.

Only one re-take will be permitted. The re-take must take place no sooner than two months and no later than six months from the date of the first examination. Normally, the composition of the Committee will remain the same.

In reporting the results of the second examination, the Committee will be limited to recommending either a pass (i.e., no more than one negative vote), or fail.

A recommendation of “fail” requires that, within five working days:

- each examiner must submit a confidential written report to the Graduate Program Director, copied to the Supervisor, detailing the reasons for his/her vote.
- the Neutral Chair must also submit a written report of the examination procedures to the Graduate Program Director.

If the Graduate Program Director upholds the recommendation to fail, the student will be required to withdraw from the Faculty of Graduate Studies. The graduate program must send the Recommendation of Required Withdrawal from Graduate Program for Failure to Maintain Academic Progress to gpoform@ucalgary.ca.

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