

We consider our PhD program to be a six year program. (Students who apply a previously awarded MA to their PhD program requirements are expected to finish in 4 years.) While some of our students complete their PhD in five years, this is rare. The narrative below describes the progress of a typical student throughout her time in our program.

PhD Program—Entering with BA only

First Year

Students must meet w/the DGS (Director of Graduate Studies) within the first week of classes. Typically, the student has been in touch with the DGS over the summer to discuss which courses the entering student should take that Fall. Each student should take a full load of three courses per semester.

All first-year students are required to attend a seminar series we call our “pro-seminar.” The students do not receive course credit for this, but they are required to attend. The format of this course is currently under revision, but in the past we have had sessions designed to meet several different goals:

- to familiarize first-year graduate students with the requirements they must meet in order to graduate
- to inform students of some of the more important university, college and departmental rules, policies, and expectations
- to offer advice and tips on how to perform the duties associated with their assistantships—typically, there are several sessions on grading papers and essays, constructing course syllabi, et.
- to introduce students to the nature and expectations of the profession they are entering into

Each first-year student must meet with the DGS in the last few weeks of the Spring semester to discuss the student’s summer plans, and to advise the student about which courses to take the following year.

Second Year

The student will take the courses she enrolled in upon consultation with the DGS the previous Spring semester. Each student should take a full load of three courses per semester.

During their fourth semester, each student is required to take and pass a PhD qualifying exam. This is usually administered the week after Spring Break.

During this semester, the student should be deciding whom she would like to be on her PhD committee, and in particular, whom she would like to chair it. Upon passing the qualifying exam, the student will schedule her advisory committee meeting, which must take place by the end of her fourth semester. (We realize that the graduate college recommends that the students have their advisory committee meeting in their second semester. However, it is quite typical for our students to still be considering several different possible dissertation areas at this time. Consequently, they will not yet know whom it would make sense to have on their committees. We encourage our students to take this time to carefully consider their choice of area and topic, so we do not require them to have the advisory committee meeting until their fourth semester.)

Third Year

The student will take a full load of three courses in the Fall, and then should have only two courses left to take in the Spring to complete the 51 required hours of coursework for the PhD (this total does not include dissertation hours).

Advanced students (e.g., those who have previous graduate work that they did not transfer, or those who have known the area they wish to work in for a long time and have been reading that literature throughout their time in graduate school) should consider taking their general exam at the end of their third year. Many students will not be in a position to do this, but those who are will be encouraged to do so.

Each third-year student must meet with her advisor (dissertation director) in the last few weeks of the Spring semester to discuss the student's summer plans, which will include either studying for the general exam or writing a prospectus. If applicable, they should also schedule the student's general exam. (The student should be done with non-dissertation-hour coursework at this point. But if she is not, she should plan her Fall coursework with her advisor at this time.)

Fourth Year

If the student has not taken her general exam in her third year, she should do so as early as possible in her fourth year. Early September should be the target date for taking the exam. The student will have had the previous summer to prepare for it.

Upon passing the general exam, the student should begin preparing a dissertation prospectus. Ideally, this will be turned in to her advisor by the end of the Fall semester. There is no departmental form or format for the prospectus. This is determined individually by each advisor, in consultation with the student.

Each fourth-year student must meet with her advisor (dissertation director) in the last few weeks of the Spring semester to discuss the student's progress on the dissertation, readiness to go on the job market, and summer plans.

Fifth Year

The student's only academic mission in this year is to write the dissertation. If a student has made sufficient progress on her dissertation by the beginning of the Fall semester, she may decide, in consultation with her advisor and the placement director, to go on the job market this year. (See the placement section of the Graduate Enrollment Plan.)

It is assumed that the student and her advisor will be in close contact throughout this year, but each student should still meet with her advisor toward the end of the Spring semester to discuss the student's progress on the dissertation, readiness to go on the job market, possible defense dates (if applicable), and summer plans.

Sixth Year

The student needs to go on the market this year, so her dissertation must be very far advanced by the beginning of the Fall semester. Preparing for the job market and putting together a good application dossier are very time consuming, and the student is not likely to get much dissertation writing done during this semester. The dissertation should be defended by the summer after the student's twelfth semester.

PhD Program—Applying a previous MA in philosophy to the PhD

(this assumes that the student receives 30 hours of credit for her MA degree)

First Year

Students must meet w/the DGS within the first week of classes. Typically, the student has been in touch with the DGS over the summer to discuss which courses the entering student should take that Fall. Each student should take a full load of three courses per semester.

All first-year students are required to attend a seminar series we call our “pro-seminar.” The students do not receive course credit for this, but they are required to attend. The format of this course is currently under revision, but in the past we have had sessions designed to meet several different goals:

- to familiarize first-year graduate students with the requirements they must meet in order to graduate
- to inform students of some of the more important university, college and departmental rules, policies, and expectations
- to offer advice and tips on how to perform the duties associated with their assistantships—typically, there are several sessions on grading papers and essays, constructing course syllabi, etc.
- to introduce students to the nature and expectations of the profession they are entering into

During their second semester, each student is required to take and pass a PhD qualifying exam. This is usually administered the week after Spring Break.

During this semester, the student should be deciding whom she would like to be on her PhD committee, and in particular whom she would like to chair it. Upon passing the qualifying exam, the student will schedule her advisory committee meeting, which must take place by the end of her second semester.

Each first-year student must meet with the DGS in the last few weeks of the Spring semester to discuss scheduling the student's general exam, the student's summer plans, and to advise the student about which course to take the following year.

Second Year

The student should have only one course left to complete the non-dissertation-hour course requirements for the PhD. She will take that one course in the Fall semester of her second year. The student should also take her general exam as early as possible in the Fall semester. Early September

should be the target date for taking the exam. The student will have had the previous summer to prepare for it.

Upon passing the general exam, the student should begin preparing a dissertation prospectus. Ideally, this will be turned in to her advisor by the end of the Fall semester. There is no departmental form or format for the prospectus. This is determined individually by each advisor, in consultation with the student.

In the Spring semester of the second year, the student should be writing her dissertation.

Third and Fourth Year

At this point, students who enter with an MA should be at the same point as fifth-year students who entered with a BA only. The expectations and requirements are the same and can be referred to above.

PhD Program—Applying some graduate credit, but not an MA, to the PhD

Due to the importance of reaching the various milestones in the program at the appropriate time, the Philosophy Department places certain restrictions on the number of hours of previous graduate work in philosophy that can be applied to the PhD degree program. As stated above, applying a full MA degree constitutes 30 credit hours, and effectively places the entering student as the equivalent of a third year student who enters with only a BA. The department will also allow the transfer of precisely 18 credit hours, which will place the entering student as the equivalent of a second year student who enters with only a BA. Other numbers of credit hours can be accepted, but this would be an exception to our general practice and would require approval of the Graduate Studies Committee. Application of 18 or 30 hours of credit can be approved by the Graduate Director alone.