



**UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY**  
FACULTY OF ARTS  
Department of Philosophy

## 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 areas of research; (2) the ability to articulate philosophical views, arguments, and criticisms that respond to the current literature, in the form of papers as well as orally; (3) a well-developed thesis proposal; and (4) 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 Graduate Chapter of the Academic Calendar, including, if applicable, the Logic Requirement
- The Field of Study Examination
- The Thesis Proposal
- The 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. If required, Phil 677 (Metalogic) should be taken by the second semester in program.
- Field of Study examination. This includes:
  - Approval of paper topics (within 8 months of first registration)
  - Submission of abstracts and bibliographies (within 9 months of first registration)
  - Submission of papers (within 13 months of first registration)

- Thesis Proposal and Thesis Proposal Oral Examination (within 20 months of first registration).

For students entering the PhD program in January and those entering directly without an MA, the timelines are extended by 4 and 12 months, respectively.

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 a written Field of Study (FoS) Examination prior to their Thesis Proposal Oral Examination and within 20 months of first registration. The FoS Examination is 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 areas and to demonstrate general intellectual and philosophical ability at the PhD level.

### ***C.1. Format and Process of Field of Study Examinations***

At first registration, the Graduate Office informs students of their FoS Paper Submission Deadline and the suggested timelines for completion of Candidacy Requirements.

The Field of Study Examination is a written examination consisting of two FoS papers in a major and a minor area, chosen by the student in consultation with the supervisor and approved by the Graduate Program Director. The major area is the student's proposed area of specialization, i.e., the broad area of their chosen dissertation. The minor area is the student's chosen field of additional research and teaching competency, which may complement the major area. Students should discuss their plans for FoS areas and the paper topics with the GPD and their supervisor well in advance.

Within 9 months of first registration, the student submits two 300-word abstracts and bibliographies for two papers, one in each of the major and minor areas, to the GPD for approval. The GPD approves the paper topics if (1) they are in the approved areas, (2) required faculty expertise is available, and (3) the topics of the major and minor area papers are not closely related. The minor and major papers will normally engage distinct bodies of literature. The GPD will take into account the range of courses available to the student in preparation for the FoS Papers.

If approved, the GPD strikes a Committee for the evaluation of the FoS papers consisting of three philosophy faculty members. Usually, the Supervisor is one of the voting members and chairs the committee. To the extent possible, the examiners will be drawn from the supervisory committee, ensuring expertise in both areas.

The student prepares the two FoS papers of between 5,000 and 7,500 words, excluding bibliography, one for each area. The bibliography need only include works cited in the papers. Typically, each FoS paper cites 15–20 papers and books. Students are encouraged to work with department faculty to polish their papers, in particular, with their Supervisory Committee. Students are explicitly allowed to revise papers previously used to satisfy course requirements as FoS papers, with the understanding that FoS papers must be more polished than typical term papers.

Within 13 months of first registration, the student submits both papers together to the examination committee, with the GPA and GPD cc'd for reference. Early evaluation of FoS Papers is at the discretion of the Committee.

### ***C.2. Evaluation of Field of Study Papers***

The examination committee will evaluate both the form and quality of the papers.

Formally, a passing FoS Paper must take the form of a professional philosophical article. The paper must address a question in one of the approved areas of philosophy and engage with the literature in that area. It should state the question the paper is attempting to answer or the philosophical objective it is pursuing. For instance, a paper may critically assess a philosophical view or argument, it may compare philosophical views, it may interpret the writings of a historical figure, it may analyze a result or practice (say, in one of the sciences) philosophically, or draw out implications of a philosophical position. In doing so, it must describe relevant views or arguments in the literature. Positions proposed must be supported by arguments or evidence. The paper's arguments must be presented explicitly, with explanations of why certain assumptions are made or not, what justifies the inferences in the argument, how the assumptions and conclusion relate to the views being discussed. When a reading of a historical figure is offered, the paper must articulate reasons for why the reading is appropriate. If a philosophical concept is applied to an example, it must be explained why the concept applies to the example. The paper must also, at least in outline, survey related views in the literature. It must appropriately cite relevant work using a standard and uniform bibliographic reference format. Students must proofread their papers and ensure they are free of spelling and grammatical mistakes.

The major paper must offer a novel contribution, be it positive, interpretative, or critical; mere surveys of the literature are unacceptable. For the minor paper, a

critical survey of the literature is acceptable. In addition to the formal criteria above, the examination committee will also evaluate the quality of the argumentation, and the philosophical acumen and skill displayed in the paper. For a paper to receive a pass, the description of others' views and arguments must be clear, accurate, and charitable. The paper must be well-organized. When new terminology is introduced, it must be defined precisely; and when existing technical terms are used, they must be used in accordance with their commonly accepted definitions, or, if competing definitions are available, the definition adopted must be given and used appropriately. Arguments offered must be cogent, and justifications must be applicable. Discussion of related literature must include relevant works from the reading list.

After a student submits their FoS papers, the members of the Committee will evaluate the papers individually and communicate their evaluation to the Chair. If every member votes to pass both papers and no member requests a meeting, the evaluation of papers concludes and the FoS exam is passed. If at least one Committee member votes to fail a submitted paper, or if one of the members of the Committee requests it, the Chair arranges a meeting of the Committee to discuss the papers. At the end of the discussion in that meeting, the Committee members vote again. In order for a paper to pass, all members of the Committee must vote to pass. When both areas are passed, the student has completed the Field of Study Examination component of the candidacy requirements.

The process of evaluating the FoS papers including the final vote should be completed within two weeks of submission. If the Committee does not make a decision within two weeks of the Paper Submission Deadline, the Graduate Program Director will ensure that the Committee comes to a decision without further delay.

The Chair will inform the student and the Graduate Program Director immediately after the evaluation of papers is concluded, which of the submitted papers passes. If one or both papers fail, the Committee will provide the student with written comments and suggestions for improving the paper and set a new submission deadline for re-evaluation of the paper or papers immediately after the decision is communicated. The new submission deadline should be set to no sooner than two months and no later than six months from the original submission deadline (fail date).

Only one resubmission of each paper is permitted. If the Committee determines a resubmitted paper is a fail, the student will be required to withdraw (see the Graduate Calendar, [Graduate Regulations](#) – Candidacy – Candidacy Examination Outcomes). The graduate program must send the *Recommendation of Required Withdrawal from Graduate Program for Failure to Maintain Academic Progress* to [gpoform@ucalgary.ca](mailto:gpoform@ucalgary.ca).

### **C.3 Appeals**

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

## **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 4,000 to 6,000 words not including the bibliography and chapter summaries. Students should work closely with their Supervisor and Supervisory Committee to develop their Thesis Proposals. The Supervisory Committee will provide guidance and feedback on Thesis Proposal drafts before a final version is submitted for examination and approval. 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 Conduct of Thesis Proposal Oral Examinations***

#### *Length of Examination*

The examination shall 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, the Neutral Chair, and the student 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, in a straw vote, which recommendation (pass/fail) they favour. 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***

#### *Passing the Thesis Proposal Oral Examination and Accepting the Thesis Proposal*

Once the committee discussion is concluded, the committee votes on the outcome of the Thesis Proposal Oral Examination.

A vote of pass indicates that in the view of the Committee, the student (1) has articulated 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, (3) has articulated a promising approach to addressing the research question, (4) has answered questions about previous or competing contributions to the topic satisfactorily, (5) can clearly articulate the motivation and importance of the proposed research, and (6) 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. Should the outcome of a final vote include at most one negative vote, the student will pass.

Passing the Thesis Proposal Oral Examination constitutes acceptance of the Thesis Proposal.

#### *Failing the Thesis Proposal or Thesis Proposal Oral examination*

Should the outcome of the vote include two or more negative votes, the Committee's recommendation to the Graduate Program Director 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 their 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.5 Appeals***

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

#### ***D.6 Re-take of Examination***

In the case of a failed Thesis Proposal Oral Examination, the student will be

permitted to retake the exam.

Only one retake will be permitted. The retake 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. The members of the Committee will communicate to the student which changes to the Thesis Proposal, if any, they consider necessary, and the student should work with their Supervisory Committee to revise the Thesis Proposal. The revised Thesis Proposal must be submitted to all members of the Thesis Proposal Examination Committee at least two weeks before the examination.

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 their 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](mailto:gpoform@ucalgary.ca).

Approved Department of Philosophy: May 9, 2023  
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