

Vanderbilt Philosophy Department PhD Program Requirements and Guidelines

The PhD Program in Philosophy is composed of the following requirements:

1. COURSEWORK REQUIREMENTS
2. LOGIC REQUIREMENT
3. FOREIGN LANGUAGE REQUIREMENT
4. DISSERTATION FIELD EXAM REQUIREMENT
5. DISSERTATION PROSPECTUS AND DISSERTATION REQUIREMENTS

Part I of this document discusses each in turn. Part II of this document provides an overview of the requirements and a statement of the standards of progress.

Part I

1. COURSEWORK REQUIREMENTS

1.1 Credits

The Graduate School requires a total of 72 hours of credit (formal coursework plus registered research hours) for the PhD. Within this 72 credit hours, the Philosophy Department requires students to complete 47 credit hours of coursework. Graduate students are required to complete at least three three-credit courses each semester, from among those courses approved by the Department for credit toward the PhD, for each of the first five semesters. During the 1st fall semester, students also are required to take a two-credit Proseminar focusing on research and teaching. By the end of the 5th semester, therefore, students will have taken a minimum of 47 credits of course work, with at least 11 in the 1st semester and 9 in each of the following four semesters.

Related requirements concerning graduate credits are as follows:

12 Seminars. By the end of the 5th semester, graduate students must have taken at least 12 regularly-scheduled graduate seminars (36 credit hours) in the Department of Philosophy.

Proseminar. In their 1st semester of graduate study, all graduate students must pass a 2-credit Department seminar on teaching and research methods. This course, graded on an A/F basis, will include guest participation by many members of the faculty.

Other Possible Sources of Credit for Remaining 9 Credit Hours. The regularly-scheduled graduate seminars and the proseminar must together account for a minimum of 38 of the required 47 credits of coursework in the Philosophy PhD program. This leaves students with some flexibility regarding the remaining 9 credits:

- (a) Regularly-scheduled graduate seminars: Students may take additional regularly-scheduled graduate seminars in the Department of Philosophy toward remaining 9 credits.

(b) Independent Studies: Students may take, with DGS approval, PHIL 8050: Readings in Philosophy (i.e., an independent study) with Department faculty toward the remaining 9 credits. Here student and professor must agree in writing to a one-semester (and no more) course of study that includes a reading list and writing assignments. Students must complete the “Request for Independent Study/Directed Studies/Readings & Research” form to enroll in the course. The form requires **original** signatures from the student, instructor, and DGS. The form must be filed with the Department, no later than the first week of classes and submitted to the Graduate School, no later than the tenth day of classes.

(c) Enhanced undergraduate-level courses: Students may take, with prior DGS approval, enhanced undergraduate level courses with Department faculty toward the remaining 9 credits. In this case, students are expected to do additional work beyond the undergraduate requirements for the course. Here student and professor must agree in writing to a one-semester (and no more) course of study that includes writing assignments. Students must complete the “Request for Permission to Receive Graduate Credit for an Undergraduate Level or Professional Course” form to enroll in an undergraduate class for graduate credit. The form requires **original** signatures from the student, instructor, and DGS. The form must be filed with the Department no later than the first week of classes, and it must be submitted to the Graduate School no later than the tenth day of classes.

(d) Transfer Credit: Under unusual circumstances and with DGS approval, at most 6 credits can be transferred into the PhD program toward the 47 credit requirement. Students entering the PhD program with graduate credit in Philosophy from strong graduate programs who would like to transfer in credit can petition to do so at the end of the spring semester of their first year. They need to set up a meeting with the DGS and supply the DGS with their transcript/s, course syllabus/syllabi, and their coursework. They should also be prepared to discuss how such transferred credit might fulfill course distribution requirements.

Graduate courses taken while at Vanderbilt in departments other than the Philosophy Department do NOT count toward the required 47 hours of the Departmental coursework, but they do count toward the 72 hours required by the Graduate School for the PhD.

After completing coursework, students will enroll in 9 hours of PHIL 8999 (Non-Candidate Research) and PHIL 9999 (PhD Dissertation Research) each semester until they have earned 72 credit hours. Once students have sufficient credits, students will continue registering for 0 credit hours of PHIL 9999 (PhD Dissertation Research) each semester to maintain their active student status until graduation.

1.2 Course Distribution

Students will take at least 5 seminars in the History of Philosophy and at least 5 seminars in Topical Areas of Philosophy, with the additional stipulation that students must take seminars from at least 3 different categories in each. The Topical Area and History categories are as

follows, and the categorization of each graduate seminar in any given semester will be designated on the Departmental course schedule.

Topical Area Categories

- T1. Mind and Language
- T2. Ethics, Politics, and Aesthetics
- T3. Metaphysics and Epistemology
- T4. Race, Gender, Identity
- T5. Contemporary Philosophical Movements

Historical Categories

- H1. Ancient Philosophy
- H2. Medieval Philosophy
- H3. Modern Philosophy
- H4. 19th Century Philosophy
- H5. 20th Century Philosophy
- H6. Trans-era History of Philosophy

1.3 Instructor Distribution

By the end of the 5th semester, graduate students must have taken **seminars from at least 8 different tenured or tenure-track faculty in the Philosophy Department.**

1.4 Incompletes

If a student wishes to get a grade of Incomplete for a given course, the student must meet with the instructor at **least one week before the final week of classes.** In that meeting a specific plan for completion of the work, including a submission date, must be approved by the instructor. The instructor should also specify the grade the student will receive if s/he does not meet the deadline for the incomplete. For final approval, the student must then submit to the DGS an “Incomplete Request Form” signed both by the student and the instructor (this form specifies the agreed-upon completion plan and the student’s current incompletes). An Incomplete grade will not be approved if a student already has an incomplete. No incompletes may be carried past August 1. Also, incompletes may negatively impact the possibility of receiving Departmental support for professional development, so students are advised to discuss this possibility with the DGS.

1.5 Course Grades

A student must earn a grade of B or higher in each course counted toward the 47 hours. Grades in the A range are the norm for graduate students, while grades in the B range are the exception. If a student accumulates 3 grades in the B range, they will need to meet with the DGS to discuss their status.

Students enrolling in Philosophy 8999 (Non-Candidate Research) and Philosophy 9999 (PhD Dissertation Research) will be assigned S/U grades, in accordance with the Graduate School’s policy: “One U grade requires consultation between the student and the research advisor; a second U grade triggers a locally defined program-level intervention process involving (at least) the student, the research advisor, the student’s thesis or dissertation committee and the DGS; and a third U grade leads to de-matriculation. These steps are triggered by the accumulation of U

grades, not simply U grades in succession. Each U represents approximately one-half of one academic year of unsatisfactory progress. No credit hours are awarded for an enrollment that earns a grade of U.”

2. LOGIC REQUIREMENT

All graduate students must satisfy the Department’s logic requirement in one of two ways: a) by passing a Departmental logic exam, or b) by receiving a “B” or better in the Department’s Formal Logic & Applications course, PHIL 3003. PHIL 3003 is offered only in the fall semester. Students with no or minimal training in logic are strongly encouraged to audit PHIL 3003 in their 1st semester. The logic requirement must be satisfied by the end of the 3rd semester. If students wish to formally audit the logic course, students must submit the “Permission to Audit” form. The form requires **original** signatures from the student and instructor. The form must be submitted to the Department during the first week of classes and submitted to the Graduate School by the tenth day of classes.

The logic exam and course work will cover the following three areas and will require a demonstration of competence at a level sufficient to teach an introductory symbolic logic course:

- 1) informal concepts of logic;
- 2) translation into symbolic notation for both propositional and predicate logic; and
- 3) natural deduction proofs for both propositional and predicate logic.

Students should contact the DGS to arrange for the administration of the exam. The exam will be given only once at the end of each semester.

Students who fail the exam or who fail to receive a grade of “B” or better in Formal Logic & Applications may re-take the exam or re-do the work for Formal Logic & Applications the next time the Department schedules the exam and/or the course.

Students must take the logic exam by the end of the 1st semester, and must pass the logic exam by the end of the 3rd semester.

Formal Logic & Applications does not qualify for graduate credit and so does not count toward the minimum of 47 credits students must accumulate by the end of the 5th semester.

3. FOREIGN LANGUAGE REQUIREMENT

All graduate students must satisfy the Department’s foreign language requirement. The requirement is satisfied by passing a Departmental exam that tests for competence in an approved foreign language. The exam will be given after the student requests it from the Administrative Assistant to the Graduate Program, who will then arrange for the exam, together with the DGS. The timed translation exam will be blind-reviewed and graded by faculty (typically but not necessarily Philosophy Department faculty) with special competence in the given foreign language. The exam will consist of the students translating into English (i) a text (selected by the faculty member administering the exam, in consultation with and approval by

the DGS) by a single philosopher (selected by the student) and (ii) a second text (selected by the faculty member administering the exam, in consultation with and approval by the DGS) by a different philosopher (selected by the faculty member). During the exam, students may use only a hard-copy dictionary. The translation exam will be marked pass or fail; passing it requires a demonstration of competence as measured by quality and quantity of translation.

Students must first **take the foreign language competence exam by September 1st of the 3rd semester** and must **pass the exam by April 15th of the 4th semester**.

4. DISSERTATION FIELD EXAM REQUIREMENT

4.1 Preparation for the Exam

The Dissertation Field Exam (DFE), or Preliminary Exam, is a crucial component of the Vanderbilt Philosophy Department PhD program. The DFE takes place during the 6th semester, and by the end of this semester students are expected to have successfully transitioned from coursework to dissertation-related work. If students have satisfied all previous Department requirements, they will have this 6th semester off from teaching (in addition to no longer having any coursework) in order to be able to devote themselves fully to this Dissertation Field Exam as well as to the Dissertation Prospectus Abstract that follows the Dissertation Field Exam at the end of the semester. While the DFE takes place during the 6th semester, work related to the DFE begins earlier; work on the DFE Bibliography and planning of a DFE Committee should begin over the previous summer (the second summer).

4.2 Dissertation Field Exam Committee

Students must choose the members of their Dissertation Field Exam Committee and report news of this DFE Committee to the DGS and the Administrative Assistant to the Graduate Program by **December 1st of the 5th semester**. This committee needs to be composed of a minimum of 3 Philosophy Department graduate faculty members, one of whom is the DFE Committee Chair. This committee need not overlap in part or whole with the later PhD Committee, though there usually is significant overlap.

4.3 Dissertation Field Exam Bibliography: Draft and Final

Students must also submit a complete **draft** of their DFE bibliography to their DFE Committee members, the DGS, and the Administrative Assistant to the Graduate Program by **December 1st of the 5th semester**. The bibliography should include approximately 50 sources and should follow bibliography formatting guidelines as specified in a leading source such as the Chicago Manual of Style. Students are advised to begin work on this bibliography over the previous (second) summer in the program.

Students must have a complete **final** DFE bibliography approved by their DFE Committee by **January 15th of the 6th semester**, and students must email this approved bibliography to the DGS and the Administrative Assistant to the Graduate Program by this date.

4.4 Dissertation Field Exam Questions

By **February 15 of the 6th semester**, students must submit to the DGS, the Administrative Assistant to the Graduate Program, and to the members of the DFE Committee, a final list of

Possible DFE Questions, previously approved of by the student's DFE Chair. Usually anywhere from six to nine questions are given, each of which looks forward to the possible dissertation area.

4.5 Dissertation Field Exam

In the 6th Semester, students will be given their DFE (which will be a subset of the questions on the list of possible DFE questions) by their DFE Chair at some **prearranged point during Spring Break and will be instructed by the DFE Chair about when to return the exam.** Students are usually given around 3 questions and answers are usually around 10-15 pages each, depending on the number of questions and amount of time given. The maximum amount of time that a Chair can give is all of Spring Break (from the Friday before Spring Break until the Monday morning after), but less time can also be given.

4.6 Dissertation Field Exam Oral Defense

The DFE Oral Defense needs to be taken and passed **within one week following the Monday after Spring Break** (by the end of the following Monday) of the 6th semester. The oral defense tests the student on the written exam and the broader constellation of issues brought up by material listed in the bibliography.

Provided the student passes the Oral Defense, they move on to the Dissertation Prospectus Abstract (see below). If they fail to Oral Defense, they may be dismissed from the program or they may be given another chance to take the exam, depending in part on factors surrounding the failure, previous performance in the program, and the degree of promise they have shown. If a student fails the exam twice, they will be dismissed from the program.

5. DISSERTATION PROSPECTUS PROCESS AND DISSERTATION REQUIREMENTS

5.1 PhD Candidacy

Admission to the Philosophy Graduate Program does not imply admission to candidacy for the PhD degree. To be admitted to PhD candidacy, the student must satisfy Departmental requirements, and the last of these are the Dissertation Prospectus Abstract, the Dissertation Prospectus, and the Dissertation Prospectus Defense (Qualifying Exam). Once students have successfully defended their Dissertation Prospectus, they are admitted to the PhD candidacy and have All But Dissertation (ABD) status.

5.2 Dissertation Prospectus Abstract

After a student successfully passes the Oral Defense of their Dissertation Field Exam, they must next complete a Dissertation Prospectus Abstract by **April 15th in the 6th semester.** This Abstract should be one page long, single-spaced. The student should e-mail this Abstract to their DFE Committee members, the DGS, and the Administrative Assistant to the Graduate Program.

The Abstract should be submitted to an agreed-upon Dissertation Advisor and at least one more faculty member who has agreed to serve on the Dissertation Committee. Students must meet with these members individually by **May 1st of the 6th semester** for feedback on this abstract, and they must send an e-mail to all with whom they have met and the DGS and the Administrative Assistant to the Department reporting that they have held their meetings.

5.3 Dissertation Committee

The PhD Dissertation committee is appointed by the Graduate School on the advice of the Director of Graduate Studies. The committee consists of not fewer than four members. Three of the members must be graduate faculty from within (“internal” to) the Vanderbilt Philosophy Department; a fourth “external” member must come from outside the Philosophy Department. Graduate faculty include full-time tenured and tenure-track faculty with primary appointments in the Vanderbilt Philosophy Department. Tenured or tenure-track faculty having secondary appointments in the Philosophy Department may also be considered “internal” committee members. The “external” committee member may be an appropriate academic from outside of Vanderbilt, and needs to be approved by the DGS and Graduate School.

In cases where a faculty member who had been chairing a dissertation committee departs Vanderbilt for another institution, that faculty member may serve as a co-chair of a dissertation committee, but must count as an “external” member. Emeritus philosophy faculty may not serve as the sole chair of a dissertation committee, but they may co-chair dissertation committees, and they count as “internal” committee members.

The functions of the PhD committee are to: (a) to administer the Dissertation Prospectus Oral Exam (Qualifying Examination), (b) to approve the dissertation subject, (c) to aid the student and monitor the progress of the dissertation, and (d) to read and approve the dissertation and evaluate the final Oral Dissertation Defense.

Dissertation Advisors are responsible for submitting the following paperwork to the Director of Graduate Studies (or the Administrative Assistant to the Graduate Program) to appoint the PhD committee, at latest three weeks before the Qualifying Exam.

- (i) “Request to Appoint the PhD Committee” form;
- (ii) Rationale for selecting external reader (a few paragraphs);
- (iii) CV for the external reader

The paperwork will then be submitted to the Graduate School **at least two weeks in advance of the Qualifying Exam.**

Students are encouraged to begin assembling a Dissertation Committee during the 6th semester, during or soon after the DFE process, in order to make progress on their Dissertation Prospectus Abstract. It is strongly recommended that the Committee be formally appointed during the summer following the 6th semester. At latest, Dissertation Committees may be appointed in the early fall of the 7th semester, with at least three weeks notice before the Dissertation Prospectus Oral Defense (Qualifying Exam), which itself must be completed by **September 30th of the 7th semester.**

Any changes to the PhD Committee need to be approved by the Graduate School. The form to change the committee is “Request to Change the PhD Committee.” If a new external reader will be added to the committee, the Advisor needs to provide a rationale and the reviewer’s CV to the Director of Graduate Studies (or Administrative Assistant for the Graduate Program).

5.4 Dissertation Prospectus Oral Defense (Qualifying Exam)

Under the direction of the Dissertation Advisor and with appropriate input from members of the Dissertation Committee, graduate students must write a Dissertation Prospectus. Once the Dissertation Committee has deemed the Prospectus worthy of defense, the student must take and pass a Dissertation Prospectus Oral Defense (or Qualifying Exam). This exam must be passed by **September 30th of the 7th semester**.

The final version of the Dissertation Prospectus must be distributed to the Dissertation Committee well in advance of the Dissertation Prospectus Oral Defense. It should reflect prior consultation, though not necessarily agreement, with each member of the Committee.

It is the responsibility of the Dissertation Advisor to schedule the Dissertation Prospectus Exam and to submit the “Request to Schedule the Qualifying Exam” form to the DGS (or to the Administrative Assistant to the Graduate program) at least three weeks in advance of the defense. This request must be received by the Graduate School at least two weeks in advance.

The Dissertation Prospectus Oral Defense is administered by the student’s Dissertation Committee in consultation with and approval by the DGS. The Dissertation Prospectus Oral Defense will test the student’s mastery of the proposed dissertation topic as well as the student’s overall knowledge of the sub-field within which the proposed dissertation project resides.

If a majority of Dissertation Committee members grade the Dissertation Prospectus Oral Defense as passing, the student passes the exam.

Students who fail the Dissertation Prospectus Oral Defense may be required to pursue one or more courses of action, including re-writing the Prospectus and then re-taking the exam, re-taking the exam, or assembling a different Dissertation Committee to prepare for a different exam and perhaps a different course of study. Or a student may be dismissed from the graduate program. If a student fails the Dissertation Prospectus Oral Defense on a second attempt, the student must, according to Graduate School policy, be “officially dismissed from the Graduate School unless s/he has been given the option of receiving a Master’s Degree” (<http://gradschool.vanderbilt.edu>: The Graduate School, “Maintaining Records and Monitoring Progress”). Because all possible Dissertation Prospectus Oral Defense re-takes must be completed by **September 30th of the 7th semester**, students are encouraged to schedule their Exams in the Spring or Summer before their seventh semester.

It is the responsibility of the Dissertation Advisor to complete the “Results of the Qualifying Exam” form and submit the results to the Director of Graduate Studies (or Administrative Assistant for the Graduate Program) following the defense. Once the form has the final approval of the Director of Graduate Studies, the results will be forwarded to the Graduate School.

5.5 Final Dissertation Defense

After the Dissertation Prospectus Exam, students set upon writing a dissertation under the guidance of the Dissertation Advisor and Committee. Once the Committee judges the dissertation worthy of defense, the student must take and pass a public oral examination of the dissertation. It is the responsibility of the Dissertation Advisor to schedule the Final Dissertation

Defense and to submit the “Request to Schedule Final Defense” form to the Director of Graduate Studies (or to the Administrative Assistant to the Graduate program) at least three weeks in advance of the defense. This request must be received by the Graduate School **at least two weeks in advance**.

Likewise, it is the responsibility of the Dissertation Advisor to complete the “Results of Dissertation Defense” form and submit the results to the Director of Graduate Studies (or Administrative Assistant for the Graduate Program) following the defense. Once the form has final approval of the Director of Graduate Studies, the results will be forwarded to the Graduate School.

At least a majority of the PhD committee must be present at the Dissertation Prospectus Oral Defense and at the Final Dissertation Defense and original signatures from at least a majority of the committee are required on the “Results” forms.

5.6 After the Final Defense

Following a successful Dissertation Defense, students are responsible for preparing and submitting the final version of their dissertation to the Vanderbilt Library. Students are also responsible for completing the required paperwork for the official conferral of the PhD and graduation from Vanderbilt. These matters may be discussed with the DGS at the appropriate time.

Part II

OVERVIEW OF REQUIREMENTS AND STANDARDS OF PROGRESS

In order to maintain good standing in the PhD Program, students must satisfy all requirements by the deadlines specified above. Failure to maintain good standing will result in Departmental action, which may include expulsion of the student from the PhD Program.

Training for the PhD goes beyond formal coursework and the dissertation; it includes participating in the life of the Department. Students are expected regularly to attend Departmental events, including colloquia, public lectures, workshops, and other events. Moreover, students are expected to exhibit an appropriate level of professionalism and responsibility in their roles as students, scholars, teachers, colleagues, and academic citizens. All graduate students should check and respond to their Departmental e-mail daily and should check their ground mail at least twice a week.

A student’s fellowship funding and good standing in the graduate in the graduate program are conditional upon the student’s meeting appropriate standards of progress. In usual cases, these standards are as follows:

- At the end of the 1st semester, students must have completed eleven credits, including three three-credit courses and the required two-credit Proseminar.
- At the end of the 2nd semester, students must have completed three additional three-credit courses for nine additional credits, thereby bringing the student's total number of coursework credits to 20, and must have taken the Logic Exam or earned a "B" in Logic 3003.
 - *First summer:* The Department strongly encourages students to study for the Foreign Language Exam if they have not already satisfied this requirement and/or study for the Logic Exam if they have not already satisfied the Logic Requirement.
- At the end of the 3rd semester, students must have complete three additional three-credit courses for nine additional credits, thereby bringing the student's total number of coursework credits to 29, and must have *passed* the Logic Exam (or have previously earned "B" or higher in Logic 3003). Students must also take the Foreign Language Exam by September 1st.
- At the end of the 4th semester, students must have completed three additional three-credit courses for nine additional credits, thereby bringing the student's total number of coursework credits to 38. Students must pass the Foreign Language Competence Exam by April 15th.
 - *Second Summer:* The Department strongly encourages students to begin work on their Dissertation Field Exam Bibliography. They should also begin organizing the Bibliography into levels of priority and should begin reading material from the Bibliography. Students may also want to start putting together their Dissertation Field Exam committee. Students must be in compliance with all Departmental requirements by August 20th in order to qualify for the upcoming 6th semester off from teaching.
- At the end of the 5th semester, students must have completed three additional three-credit courses for nine additional credits, thereby bringing the student's total number of coursework credits to 47 and must have satisfied all distribution requirements.
- In the 6th semester, students must register for at least 9 research hours. By the end of this semester, students must have successfully completed their Dissertation Field Exam Bibliography, the DFE (Preliminary Exam), the DFE Oral Defense, and the Dissertation Prospectus Abstract.
 - *Third Summer:* Students should complete their Dissertation Prospectus if they have not already done so, should defend the Dissertation Prospectus, or should be working on their dissertation.

- In the 7th Semester, students must have passed the Dissertation Prospectus Oral Exam (Qualifying Exam) by September 30th. If students are *not* ABD entering the 7th semester, they should register for a sufficient number of Phil 8999 Non-Candidate Research credits to stay on pace for the timely completion of the required 72 credit-hours by the time they are ready to defend the dissertation; if students *are* ABD at the start of the 7th semester, they should register for Phil 9999 PhD Dissertation Research instead. (Please note the policy on “S” and “U” grades for Phil 9999, above, under “Course Grades.”)
- In the 8th, 9th, and 10th semesters, students must register for a sufficient number of PhD Dissertation Research credits (Phil 9999) to ensure the completion of the required 72 credit-hours by the time they are ready to defend the dissertation. (Please note the policy on “S” and “U” grades for Phil 9999, above, under “Course Grades.”)
- By the end of the 10th semester, students should have completed a dissertation and passed a public Final Dissertation Defense, thereby completing all requirements for the PhD. Graduate students for whom the faculty have approved a longer course of study should complete and defend the dissertation and all PhD requirements according to the schedule. No funding is guaranteed beyond this (10th) semester.