PhD Student Handbook

PHILOSOPHY

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PURPOSE OF STUDENT HANDBOOK

The purpose of the PhD in PHILOSOPHY Student Handbook is to help guide students as they progress through the PhD program. Because the PhD program is conferred and governed by the academic requirements established by the Vanderbilt University (VU) Graduate School, students should also be familiar with the policies and procedures in the Vanderbilt University Student Handbook and Vanderbilt University Graduate School Catalog. For questions about information in the handbook, students should contact their advisor, the Program Manager, or the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS). This handbook governs all PhD students currently in the program.

AI POLICY AND ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

All graduate students at Vanderbilt are bound by the Vanderbilt Honor Code to present only their original work as their own. It is the student's responsibility to be familiar with the Graduate Honor Council Bylaws, which can be found here: https://gradschool.vanderbilt.edu/academics/honor-council/. The concept of academic integrity lies at the heart of scholarly research and academic dishonesty of any form will be tolerated. Students who commit such acts expose themselves to punishments including failure for the course, suspension, and expulsion from the program.

Unless explicitly authorized by a faculty member for a specific assignment or clearly delimited purpose, **the use of AI text-generation tools is prohibited for all PhD work**. The use of such tools in philosophy often degrades independent thinking, reading, writing, and research, and students who rely on these tools for purposes related to philosophy potentially undermine their own learning and inhibit the acquisition of essential skills for the profession. Without explicit authorization by a faculty member (in the case of coursework) or the entire committee (in the case of work related to a dissertation), the prohibition on AI use is inclusive of all stages of philosophical work, including but not limited to: reading and summarizing; brainstorming, planning, and outlining; drafting, writing, and editing. AI use is entirely prohibited for all work associated with the Field Exam (FE). Suspected cases will be immediately sent to the Graduate Honor Council.

OVERVIEW OF PHD PROGRAM

Work for the PhD degree is offered in all major fields and historical periods of philosophy. The department has strengths in epistemology, ethics, feminist philosophy, metaphysics, phenomenology, philosophy of language, philosophy of mind, philosophy of religion, and social and political philosophy. Our faculty reflects a variety of approaches and methodologies, including analytic, continental, historical, and pragmatic.

Below are core objectives with the program outline.

1. The Program is designed to be completed in six years.

2. All students admitted to the PhD program receive from the Vanderbilt Graduate School graduate fellowships that typically include a tuition waiver, a stipend, health insurance, and other benefits. The fellowship is subject to periodic departmental review, but students maintaining good standing typically can expect to receive a fellowship for the full six years.

3. As part of training towards the PhD, students are assigned various service roles. Although the 1st semester and the 6th semester are typically service free, in other semesters, graduate students will be assigned to lead discussion sections, serve as teaching or research assistants, and teach introductory level undergraduate courses in philosophy.

4. It is the responsibility of each graduate student who is employed as a teaching or research assistant to carry out their duties as set by their assigned faculty member throughout the course of the semester. For those with teaching assignments, the semester does not end until grades are computed and posted. Those graduate students who are teaching must be present for each class session. Except for last minute emergencies, absences must be approved in advance by the Department Chair or Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) and alternate arrangements for the class, acceptable to the DGS must be made. It is not acceptable to miss classes at the beginning or end of the semester, as well as during the semester, without the express consent of the DGS.

5. In addition to the student's funding package from the Graduate School, there are additional opportunities for research funding and support available from the Graduate School. Also, based on availability of funds, the Philosophy Department allots $1000 a year in travel funding to each doctoral student in good standing who is presenting at a scholarly conference. This funding is to be used for a single conference trip, i.e., it does not function like a research account from which a graduate student may draw for multiple trips in a given year. Doctoral students must request authorization for travel reimbursement in advance of the planned trip. Students can consult the DGS for more information.

DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

1. Six Requirements

1.1 The following six requirements compose the PhD Program in Philosophy at Vanderbilt.

1. Coursework Requirement
2. Logic Requirement
3. Foreign Language Requirement
4. Field Exam Requirement
5. Dissertation Prospectus Requirement
6. Dissertation Requirement

1.2 Students must also satisfy any additional requirements specified by the Vanderbilt Graduate School pertaining to the responsible conducting of research and other matters that are not specific to the discipline of philosophy. Students may consult with the DGS for more information.

1.3 In order to maintain good standing in the PhD Program, students must satisfy all requirements by the specified deadlines. Failure to maintain good standing renders a student liable to expulsion from the PhD Program, and will in any case result in Departmental action.

1.4 Beyond coursework and dissertation research, progress towards the PhD also involves participation in the life of the Department. Students are expected to attend Departmental events regularly, including colloquia, public lectures, and development workshops. 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 campus ground mail at least twice a week.

2. Typical Schedule for Progress

2.1 Good standing in the graduate program is conditional upon the student's meeting standards of progress. A typical path through the program is as follows.

FIRST YEAR **FALL** (1st semester)

Take at least 3 Philosophy graduate seminars or equivalent, plus the Proseminar. (11 credits total)

Audit Formal Logic & Its Applications (PHIL 3003) and pass the exam at the end of the course with at least a B.

Complete any mandatory Graduate School workshops including Responsible Conduct of Research Requirement

SPRING (2nd semester)
Take at least 3 Philosophy graduate seminars or equivalent. (20 credits total)

Attend and complete any mandatory Graduate School workshops

SUMMER
Prepare to satisfy the Language Requirement.

SECOND YEAR **FALL** (3rd semester)
Take at least 3 Philosophy graduate seminars or equivalent. (29 credits total)

Take Foreign Language Exam by **September 1st**.

SPRING (4th semester)
Take at least 3 Philosophy graduate seminars or equivalent. (38 credits total)

DGS Consultation to declare a field for the Field Exam.

SUMMER
Begin reading the departmental reading list for one's Field Exam.

THIRD YEAR **FALL** (5th semester)
Take at least 3 Philosophy graduate seminars or equivalent. (47 credits total)

Complete reading for the FE, begin formulating a Focus Statement

Fifth Semester DGS Consultation, appoint an FE Committee

All course requirements ***must*** be satisfied by end of semester.

SPRING (6th semester)
Register full-time for non-candidate research; 9 credits. (56 credits total)
(Students in good standing at the beginning of the 3rd year are relieved from teaching and other service duties)

In consultation with the FE Committee Chair, compose a Focus Statement, to be submitted to the FE Committee and DGS no later than **February 15th**

Pass the FE Oral Examination **before Spring Break**. If permitted to retake oral examination, exam must be passed by **May 1st**.

SUMMER
Conduct research necessary for designing and drafting a Dissertation Prospectus and form Dissertation Committee

Work on Dissertation Prospectus

FOURTH YEAR **FALL** (7th semester)
Register for 9 credits of non-candidate research. (65 credits total)

Must appoint a full Dissertation Committee in the first week of the semester at the latest.

Defend Dissertation Prospectus no later than **September 30th**.

SPRING (8th semester)
Register for 7 hours of full time for dissertation research (reaching 72 credits total).

Attend Job Placement Meeting, begin preparing job dossier.

SUMMER
Dissertation writing.

Prepare job dossier.

FIFTH YEAR **FALL** (9th semester)
Register full time for dissertation research (0 hours)

SPRING (10th semester)
Register for full time for dissertation research (0 hours).

SIXTH YEAR **FALL** (11th semester)
Register full time for dissertation research (0 hours).

SPRING (12th semester)
Register for full time for dissertation research (0 hours).

3. Requirements Explained: Coursework

3.1 *Course Credit*. The Graduate School requires a total of 72 hours of credit (formal coursework plus registered research hours) for the PhD. Within these 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, 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.

3.2 *12 Seminars*. By the end of the 5th semester, graduate students must have taken at least 12 regularly scheduled graduate seminars (36 credit hours) taught in the Department of Philosophy.

3.3 *The 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.

3.4 *The Remaining 9 Credit Hours*. The regularly scheduled graduate seminars and the proseminar together account for a minimum of 38 of the required 47 credits 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 Philosophy Department.

(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.

3.4.1 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.

3.4.2 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 72 credits, they will continue registering for 0 credit hours of PHIL 9999 (PhD Dissertation Research) each semester to maintain their active student status until graduation.

3.5 *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 Topic 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

3.5.1 Only graduate-level seminars that are taught in the philosophy department by philosophy department faculty can satisfy the Distribution Requirement.

3.6 *Incompletes*. Students are strongly discouraged from taking incompletes, and faculty are not required to offer them. In special cases where an Incomplete is warranted (and permitted by the faculty member), any student seeking an incomplete must make a request to the DGS in writing that specifies a clear rationale for the Incomplete and a workable plan (drawn in consultation with the seminar instructor) for completing the incomplete work by a specified date. This request must get approval from the DGS and the seminar instructor before an Incomplete grade can be entered.

3.6.1 The Graduate School mandates that outstanding work be completed and graded within 12 weeks after the course end date in order to resolve an incomplete. The incomplete will turn into an F after that point.

3.6.2 Failure to meet a deadline for resolving an incomplete renders a student liable to disciplinary action by the department, including expulsion from the program. Incompletes that have transferred into Fs will be counted by the department as failing grades.

3.6.3 A student carrying multiple incompletes at the close of any given semester is subject to departmental review.

3.7 *Seminar Grades*. Grades in the A range are the norm for graduate students, while grades in the B range are the exception. B-range grades communicate that the submitted work for the seminar falls below the level expected of graduate students. If a student accumulates 2 grades in the B range, they will need to meet with the DGS to discuss their status. If a student accumulates more than 2 B-range grades, they will fall out of good standing and may face expulsion from the program.

3.8 *Research Grades*. Students enrolled 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.*"

4. Requirements Explained: Logic

4.1 All graduate students must satisfy the Department's logic requirement. This can be done 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. All students are strongly encouraged to audit PHIL 3003 in their 1st semester.

4.1.1 Students with little or no training in logic are encouraged to *formally audit* PHIL 3003 in the 1st semester. This required that they submit a "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.

4.2 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;
3) natural deduction proofs for both propositional and predicate logic.

4.3 Students who elect not to audit PHIL 3003 in the 1st semester should contact the DGS to arrange for the administration of the departmental exam. The exam will be given only once at the end of each semester.

4.4 Students who fail the exam or who receive a grader lower than B PHIL 3003 will be required to *formally audit* PHIL 3003 next time it is offered in the department and take the exam at the end of that course.

4.4.1 Thus, 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.

4.4.2 Even when formally audited, PHIL 3003 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.

5. Requirements Explained: Foreign Language

5.1 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 arranged at the student's request from the DGS, who will then organize the exam. 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.

5.2 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.

5.3 Students must first take the foreign language competence exam by September 1st of the 3rd semester.

5.3.1 Students who do not pass the foreign language competence exam will be given until the end of the 4th semester to do so.

6. Requirements Explained: Field Exam

6.1 *Rationale for the Exam*. Progress towards the PhD involves selecting a field of specialization within the discipline in which one's dissertation topic will reside. The field of specialization will reflect the categories recognized in the broader discipline as standard "Areas of Specialization" (AOS). The selected field will be the focus of a Field Exam (FE), which is an oral examination to be conducted in the 6th semester by an appointed three-person committee of Philosophy Department faculty.

6.1.1 At the end of the 4th semester, students will schedule a consultation meeting with the DGS to declare a field of specialization and procure the department reading list for that field.

6.1.2 The point of the FE is to ensure that students have gained a broad mastery of the central works, arguments, problems, and ideas that animate a recognized field of research specialization within the discipline of Philosophy. Such mastery is a necessary first step in establishing an AOS, while writing a dissertation is typically the second step.

6.2 *Departmental Reading List*. Once declaring a field of specialization in consultation with the DGS, students will access the departmental reading list for their selected field.

6.2.1 The departmental reading lists, composed of roughly 40 sources (including books and articles), are developed by departmental faculty with the relevant expertise, and reflect a baseline *lingua franca* within the AOS, rather than a substantive judgment about what is *best* or *most important* in the field. The reading lists represent the *rudiments* within the field – the materials that those working in the field expect everyone else in the field to know. Mastery of the materials on the departmental reading list provides the foundation against which the more specific research for the dissertation can be built.

6.1.2 Students will devote the summer of their second year in the program to the departmental reading list in their chosen field.

6.3 *Fifth Semester DGS Consultation and Forming of FE Committee*. In the first two weeks of the 5th semester, each student will have a consultation meeting with the DGS. During this consultation, the DGS, working with the department chair, will appoint an FE committee composed of three Philosophy faculty members with the relevant expertise, identifying one as the FE Committee Chair. Students must arrange to meet with the entire FE Committee at least once during the fall semester to discuss their progress with the departmental reading list. By the

close of the 5th semester, students are expected to have completed all coursework and to have read all of the materials contained in the departmental reading list of their chosen field.

6.4 *The Focus Statement*. Beginning early in the 6th semester, the student will work with their FE Committee Chair to develop a "Focus Statement" identifying the topic, issue, problem, or debate within the student's field on which the student intends to write a dissertation. The Focus Statement should be roughly 5000 words, reflecting an engagement with the current state-of-play regarding its topic. The Focus Statement need not propose a novel thesis, but it should (a) present a survey of the current dialectical terrain within which the student intends to work, and (b) establish that this is philosophically rich terrain for the student's dissertation by showing that there are one or more important unresolved problems or lacunas in this terrain that the student could reasonably be expected to resolve or fill within the scope of their dissertation. The Focus Statement must therefore demonstrate both a command of its topic adequate for someone beginning to formulate a dissertation project, and that the dialectical terrain presented is fertile ground for philosophical intervention and development.

6.4.1 The Focus Statement will normally require the student to master specialized materials that go beyond the department reading list for their field. The Focus Statement must include a bibliography of any such material.

6.4.2 It is expected that the Focus Statement will serve as the preliminary basis for the early part of the student's dissertation prospectus

2.6.4.3 The Focus Statement must be approved by the FE Committee Chair and distributed to the FE Committee and DGS by **February 15th** of the 6th semester.

6.5 *The Examination*. The FE is an oral examination conducted by the FE Committee. The FE will test the student's command of the materials on the department reading list, as well as any additional materials invoked in the student's Focus Statement.

6.5.1 The purpose of the FE is twofold. First, it aims to help the student sharpen their mastery of the rudiments within their chosen field. Second, it aims to help the student sharpen their command of the topic identified in the Focus Statement, so that they could more successfully begin formulating a dissertation topic.

6.5.2 The FE must be conducted **before Spring Break**.

6.6 *FE Results.* After completing the FE, the FE Committee will vote to either pass or fail the student. It is the responsibility of the FE Committee Chair to report the results of the FE to the DGS within 24 hours of its completion.

6.6.1 In the case that the student fails the FE, the Committee may recommend to the DGS that a second oral exam on the same material be scheduled, or they may propose other

remedies. If a student is permitted to retake the FE, the exam must be passed **by May 1st of the 6th** semester. Any student who fails the FE twice will be dismissed from the program.

6.6.2 Typically, a student will appoint the internal members of their Dissertation Committee shortly following the passing of their FE. There is no expectation that the Dissertation Committee and the FE Committee are composed of the same members, although there can be overlap between the two committees. The FE Committee is appointed by the department, whereas students form their dissertation committees guided by advice from faculty.

7. Requirements Explained: Dissertation Prospectus and Qualifying Exam

7.1 *Advancing to Candidacy*. Admission to the Philosophy PhD Program does not imply admission to candidacy for the PhD. To be admitted to PhD candidacy, the student must satisfy departmental requirements, and the last of these is to compose and orally defend a dissertation prospectus. Once students have successfully defended their dissertation prospectus, they are admitted to the PhD candidacy and have "All But Dissertation" (ABD) status. In the language of the Graduate School, the oral defense of the dissertation prospectus is the "Qualifying Exam."

7.2 *What the Prospectus Is*. The dissertation prospectus must be written under the supervision of a regular, full-time member of the Vanderbilt Philosophy Department, who will presumably serve as the dissertation director. It is a succinct statement of the problem, related literature, procedure, method of research, primary or secondary sources, as well as an indication of the contribution the dissertation will make to philosophy. A prospectus must be clearly and concisely written, and it should reflect the student's capacity to do original research and complete the project.

7.2.1 The prospectus must address the following issues, though not necessarily in the order of their listing here:

1. The problem, (hypo)thesis, and its significance
2. Literature to which the project contributes.
3. Method and procedure.
4. Tentative chapter outline and abstracts or overviews of each chapter.

7.2.2 The length of the prospectus is variable, though they typically fall within the range of 15 to 25 pages.

7.2.3 A prospectus must also include bibliography indicating read and unread material whose mastery is necessary for the successful execution of the dissertation research.

7.3 *The Dissertation Committee*. Before a dissertation prospectus can be defended, the student must formally appoint a dissertation committee. The dissertation committee is appointed by the Graduate School on the advice of the DGS. 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, one of who serves also as the Dissertation Director and Committee Chair; 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. Only faculty with primary appointments in the Philosophy Department are eligible to serve as the dissertation committee chair.

7.3.1 The functions of the dissertation committee are: (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.

7.3.2 Students are encouraged to begin informally assembling a dissertation committee during or soon after the FE process in the 6th semester. At the latest, the dissertation committee should be appointed formally at the beginning of the 7th semester, with at least three weeks' notice before the Dissertation Prospectus Oral Defense (Qualifying Examination), which must be passed by **September 30th** of the 7th semester.

7.3.3 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 director needs to provide a rationale and the external's CV to the DGS (or administrative assistant for the graduate program).

7.3.4 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.

7.3.5 The chairs of FE and Dissertation committees must be members of the Philosophy Department core faculty. Core faculty are those who are full-time, graduate faculty whose primary appointments are in Philosophy. If the committee is co-chaired, at least one of those co-chairs must be a member of the core faculty.

7.3.6 It is the student's responsibility, in consultation with faculty and the DGS, to form the dissertation committee and secure a committee chair/dissertation advisor. Students

who are unable to secure a committee chair and/or committee within the above timeframe will be reviewed by the department and face possible dismissal from the program.

7.4 *Appointing the Dissertation Committee*. It is the responsibility of the student to submit to the DGS all paperwork necessary to appoint the dissertation committee. The graduate school requires that when dissertation committees include an external member from outside of Vanderbilt, the request to appoint the committee must include a current CV for the external member, and a paragraph (composed by the dissertation director) explaining why the proposed external committee member is appropriate to serve on the student's dissertation committee.

Thus, the student must complete and submit to the DGS:

1. A "Request to Appoint the PhD Committee" form
2. A rationale for selecting external reader
3. A copy of the proposed external reader's current CV

7.4.1 The dissertation committee must be officially appointed at least three weeks prior to the date of the Qualifying Exam.

7.5 *The Qualifying Examination (Dissertation Prospectus Defense)*. The final version of the dissertation prospectus must be distributed to all members of the dissertation committee well in advance – typically at least one month – of the Qualifying Exam. It should reflect prior consultation, though not necessarily agreement, with each member of the committee. Students generally take the Qualifying Exam at the end of the 6th semester or at the beginning of the 7th semester. The Qualifying Exam must be passed by **September 30th of the 7th semester**.

7.5.1 The Qualifying Examination provides an opportunity for a collective work session, so the candidate should emphasize debatable theoretical and methodological questions, as well as providing preliminary answers to them. In addition, the student should demonstrate knowledge of the field in which these debates take place. Upon passing the Qualifying Examination, the student will submit their prospectus to the DGS for approval.

7.5.2 Students who fail the Qualifying Exam may be required to pursue one or more courses of action, including re-taking the oral exam, re-writing the Prospectus and then re-taking the oral exam, or assembling a different dissertation committee to prepare for a different exam and perhaps a different course of study. A student may be dismissed from the graduate program upon failing the Qualifying Exam.

7.5.3 According to Graduate School policy, any student that fails the Dissertation Prospectus Oral Defense on a second attempt must be "officially dismissed from the Graduate School unless s/he has been given the option of receiving a Master's Degree."

7.5.4 It is the responsibility of the student to complete the "Results of the Qualifying Exam" form and submit the results to the DGS directly following the defense. Once the form has the final approval of the DGS, the results will be forwarded to the Graduate School.

7.5.5 At least a majority of the dissertation committee must be present for the Qualifying Exam.

7.6 *ABD Status*. Once a student has successfully defended a dissertation prospectus, and the dissertation director has submitted the requisite paperwork, the student achieves "ABD" status and is authorized to begin writing their dissertation.

8. Requirements Explained: Dissertation

8.1 *What a Dissertation Is.* The final step towards earning the PhD is writing and orally defending a PhD dissertation. A dissertation in Philosophy is a systematic work of at least three chapters that advances a clear, original thesis regarding a philosophical topic, engages with contemporary scholarship related to that topic, demonstrates mastery of the research techniques relevant to professional work on the topic, and makes a contribution to the academic community it addresses.

8.1.1 Students should be aware of the arduousness of preparing the dissertation. Dissertations require focused research and successive revisions, in consultation with a dissertation director and other committee members. Successful progress typically requires at least 40 hours of focused dissertation work a week until completion.

8.1.2 In order to maintain good standing in the program, ABD students must submit dissertation work every semester to their advisors. They must also meet with their advisors regularly to discuss their progress.

8.1.3 In consultation with the dissertation advisor, draft chapters of the dissertation will be distributed to other members of the committee for their suggestions, comments, and criticisms.

8.1.4 The dissertation should be formatted according to one of the standard citation systems used in the discipline of Philosophy, such as the Chicago style, as detailed in the *Chicago Manual of Style*.

8.2 *The Dissertation Defense*. Once the dissertation is complete in the judgement of the dissertation director, there is a dissertation defense ("Final Exam") at which the student presents the results of their research and is questioned about the implications of the work for her chosen field within Philosophy by the dissertation committee. The dissertation defense is open to the

public and is scheduled with public notice. At the conclusion of this session, the defense is closed and a vote is taken by dissertation committee members. The committee can vote to pass the dissertation or pass the dissertation provided certain (typically minor) changes are made by the candidate and then approved by the dissertation director. Alternatively, the committee can vote to fail the dissertation and require the student to undertake major revisions schedule a new Final Exam.

8.2.1 It is the responsibility of the student to schedule the final dissertation defense and to submit the "Request to Schedule Final Defense" form to the DGS at least three weeks in advance of the defense. This request must be received by the Graduate School at least two weeks in advance.

8.2.1 It is the responsibility of the student to complete the "Results of Dissertation Defense" form and submit the results to the DGS following the defense. Once the form has the final approval of the DGS, the results will be forwarded to the Graduate School.

8.2.3 At least a majority of the dissertation committee must be present Final Exam.

8.2.4 Original signatures from at least a majority of the committee are required on the "Results" form.

8.3 *After the Final Exam*. 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.

9. Requirements explained: Graduation

9.1 It is the student's responsibility to acquire, complete, and submit the Graduate School forms that are required for graduation.

9.1.1 Students must be approved by the Graduate School to graduate intra-term following the school-based degree certification process. All grades must be assigned to the student record, the requisite degree minimums and maximums must be met, and all degree audits (if any) must run clean. No extensions will be given.

9.1.2 Graduate students who plan to graduate must be enrolled or on leave of absence (LOA) during the semester they plan to graduate, including summer semester. Upon graduation, the graduate's stipend will be terminated. Holding a PhD is incompatible with the reception of a TA-stipend. E.g.: May graduates will not receive their TA-stipends over the summer.

9.1.3 Deadlines, forms, procedures for graduation are posted on the Graduate School website.

PROGRESS TOWARDS THE DEGREE

1. Departmental Reviews: To ensure that students are making adequate progress towards completing the PhD, the department will conduct a review of every graduate student at the close of each academic year. Students will be sent an evaluation letter at the close of each academic year assessing their progress in the relevant dimensions.

   1.1 In order to continue in good standing while taking coursework, students must:

   - Fulfill all applicable requirements by the stated deadlines as stipulated in this document.
   - Not be carrying incompletes.
   - Not receive more than two B-range grades.

   1.2 In order to continue in good standing after having completed coursework, students must:

   - Fulfill all applicable requirements by the stated deadlines as stipulated in this document.
   - Maintain regular contact with the DGS, Chair, and faculty advisor
   - Submit written work as required

   1.3. Students at the dissertation stage must turn in written work to their advisor every semester. Failure to do so will result in a grade of "unsatisfactory" (U). Unsatisfactory grades can render a student liable to expulsion from the program.

   1.4 The department will conduct an additional review of second and third-year students each December to ensure that good progress through the coursework requirements.

   1.5 The department may also review a student's progress at any time.

2. Consultation Meetings: Maintaining good standing in the program requires regular meetings with the DGS and other faculty holding administrative roles within the department. The DGS, and possibly also the Chair, will routinely call mandatory meetings, sometimes for one-on-one consultation, but also for members of a cohort.

Some of these meetings will take the form of workshops or discussion sessions focused on, e.g., the job market. Students must attend these meetings.

2.1 At crucial junctures and milestones, students will meet individually with the DGS to discuss progress and design a path towards satisfying departmental requirements.

2.1.1 There are two DGS Consultation Meetings that are particularly crucial. One occurs at the end of the 4th semester, where students will declare a field of specialization for their Field Exam (FE). The other occurs at the beginning of the 5th semester, where the DGS will confirm the student's completion of the requirements to-date and assist the student in appointing an FE Committee.

3. Milestones at a Glance:

The following is offered as a quick guide to major deadlines for progress towards the PhD. For detailed information, see Part 2 of this document.

Semester 1:	Satisfy Logic Requirement by end of the semester
Semester 3:	Satisfy Language Requirement by **September 1**
Semester 4:	DGS Consult to declare a field of specialization for the Field Exam
Semester 5:	DGS Consult to appoint an FE Committee
Semester 6:	Complete Focus Statement by **Feb 15**
	FE passed before Spring Break
Semester 7:	Defend Dissertation Prospectus by **September 30**
Semester 8-12:	Write and Defend Dissertation

4. Leave, Withdrawals, Residency:

4.1 *Leave of Absence*. The Graduate School requires students to be registered every semester they are in the program (except for summer). Students who want to interrupt their graduate study must meet with the DGS. If the DGS sees fit, the department will

then be petitioned. Upon departmental approval, application will be made to the Graduate School for an authorized Leave of Absence (LOA). LOA is granted for a maximum of one year. Those without authorized leave who do not register are dismissed from the Graduate School and are not considered students. If they want to resume graduate study at Vanderbilt, they must petition for reinstatement. Students do not receive their stipends or benefits while on LOA.

4.2 *Parental Leave*. All students enrolled full-time in the Graduate School and supported by funding from either internal or external sources are covered by the university's Parental Leave policy. This includes students with funding through stipends, such as training grants or service-free fellowships, and students compensated for services, such as teaching or research assistants. Prior to and/or following childbirth or adoption of an infant, the primary caregiver (whether mother or father) will be allowed to take six weeks of parental leave. During this period, the student's current stipend, and, if applicable, funding for health insurance and tuition, will be continued without interruption. The student's enrollment status will be continued during this period as well.

4.3 *Withdrawal*. Students who intend to withdraw from the program must inform the DGS. The DGS will then inform the Graduate School in writing. Improper notification may result in academic and financial penalties.

4.5 *Residency*. All graduate students must be in residency while taking courses, teaching, and writing their dissertations. The philosophy department expects all students to actively participate in department events, including colloquia, conferences, symposia, and other academic activities.

Students are expected to be familiar with and are also under the jurisdiction of the academic regulations as laid out in the Graduate School Catalog: https://registrar.vanderbilt.edu/catalogs/.

OTHER RESOURCES

Vanderbilt University offers a wide array of student support resources for health, wellness, student life and identity, academic support, funding, professional development, and administrative assistance. Please visit Vanderbilt's Graduate School website at https://gradschool.vanderbilt.edu/ where you can find resources for support units such as the University Counseling Center (UCC), International Student & Scholar Support (ISSS), AdvancED (formerly Center for Teaching), Graduate and Postdoc Academic Success Program (GPAS), Career Center, and many others.

Vanderbilt's Free Expression Policy: https://www.vanderbilt.edu/dialogue-vanderbilt/free-expression/.