



**Department of
Philosophy 2022 - 2023
Graduate Handbook**

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Message from the Chair

Welcome to the Department of Philosophy at McMaster University, a vibrant, research-and-teaching oriented department, offering courses of study leading to the B.A., M.A., and Ph.D. degrees.

We embrace a variety of approaches to philosophical study and consider the breadth of our faculty expertise to be one of the great advantages of our degree programs. Our research and teaching strengths include both continental and analytical perspectives, legal and political philosophy, ethics and applied ethics, philosophy of language, epistemology and metaphysics, and the history of philosophy from ancient to twentieth century thought.

The department provides its community of faculty and students with many opportunities to grow as scholars and as persons. To help our graduate students make the most of these opportunities, we have provided this handbook, which describes the main requirements, expectations, and timelines for our graduate programs, as well as some of the formal and informal activities that are staples of our intellectual community.

Please feel free to contact me, the department's MA or PhD Advisors, any member of the faculty, or our able department staff, should you have questions about the details contained here.

Warmest wishes,

Mark Johnstone
Chair, Department of Philosophy
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Please note: This document can also be found in the following locations:

- Department website, <https://philos.humanities.mcmaster.ca/> > Graduate Programs, scroll to the very bottom of either the MA Program or PhD Program pages
- Avenue to Learn > Philosophy Department Portal

Sessional Dates 2022-2023

DEADLINE DATES FOR GRADUATE PROGRAMS	FALL TERM	WINTER TERM	SUMMER TERM
		September - December 2022	January - April, 2023
On-Time Registration	Tuesday, July 5 to Tuesday, August 2	Thursday, November 24 to Thursday, December 8	Thursday, March 30 to Thursday, April 13
Class Start Dates *	Classes begin on or after September 1, 2022- check with program for details	Classes begin on or after Jan 3, 2023 - check with program for details	Class start dates vary - check with program for details
Late Registration (late fees apply)	August 3 to September 7	December 9 to January 3	April 14 to April 28
Final Dates to Add Courses:			
Multi-term Courses	September 23		
Single-term or 1HF Courses	September 23	January 20	May 12
Final Dates to Drop Courses: **			
Single-term Courses	November 11	March 17	July 14
1HF Courses	October 7	February 10	June 9
Final Dates to Submit Grades:			
Single-term Courses	January 5	May 1	September 1
Final Date to Submit Results of Incomplete (INC) Grades for Previous Term with Permission of Associate Dean	March 3	July 7	November 3

Thesis

	FALL 2022	SPRING 2023	FALL 2023
Final Date to Initiate Thesis Defence in Mosaic***	June 24	February 1	June 23
Final Date to Submit Master's Theses to Departments (Prior to Defense)	August 5	March 3	August 4
Final date to file theses with Graduate Studies and Complete Degree Requirements ****	Sept 27	April 28	September 26

The University welcomes and includes students, staff, and faculty from a wide range of cultural, traditional, and spiritual beliefs. As per the Policy on Academic Accommodation for Religious, Indigenous and Spiritual Observances, the University will arrange reasonable accommodation of the needs of students who observe religious holy days other than those already accommodated by ordinary scheduling and statutory holidays. For more information, please refer to <https://www.mcmaster.ca/policy/Students-AcademicStudies/AcademicAccommodation-Observances.pdf>

Graduate students may only enroll in undergraduate courses with the approval of their supervisor or graduate program. Students are responsible for meeting the deadlines and requirements of the undergraduate course as presented in class and in the undergraduate calendar. Graduate students will be graded under the graduate grading scale.

Programs may establish earlier deadlines to add/drop courses but these dates must clearly be communicated to students. Students taking courses outside of their home program of study, must follow the rules of the program in which the course

is offered. Please note that the last date to cancel a course or registration with no academic penalty is not the same as the last date to be eligible for a refund.

*The precise dates of commencement of courses are determined by the program; students are urged to contact their program for details. SGS maintains the 13-week graduate instruction period; however, if a course does not fall into the traditional 13-week period, the graduate program will inform students of important dates and deadlines in the course syllabus. There is no official fall break or reading week for graduate students (except MBA). Students should check with their program and their course instructor(s) as to whether classes will be held during these periods. Please see sections 1.3 (Responsibilities of Graduate Students to the University) and 2.5.6 (Vacations) of the calendar for more information.

**All courses on a student's record after these dates will require a grade. Exceptions require submission of an In-Program Request Form. Graduate programs may establish earlier deadlines for completion of course work and may prescribe penalties for late completion of work and for failure to complete work, provided that these penalties are announced at the time the instructor makes known to the class the methods by which student performance shall be evaluated.

***Please note the following black-out periods in which **standard** Ph.D. defences cannot be scheduled: December 14th to January 8th inclusive and August 16th to 20th inclusive. Students wishing to schedule an accelerated defence during these timeframes should speak to their supervisor. Please refer to the SGS website for information about the timeline for scheduling your defence with these dates in mind.

.****Other faculties dates may vary. A final thesis is the corrected, approved version of the thesis which is uploaded to MacSphere following the Final Oral Examination. Note there is no grace period at the end of December or April for final thesis submission and completion of degree requirements.

Convocation Dates

Please consult the link below for convocation dates:

<https://registrar.mcmaster.ca/dates-and-deadlines/#tab-3>

Important dates within the department

On-Time Registration on Mosaic	July 5 to August 2
Graduate students' meetings with M.A. or Ph.D. Advisor	August 22 to August 31
TA Orientation – Department Events	September 1 & 2
Welcome Day – Department Events	September 1
Start of Fall UG Classes	September 6
Start of Graduate Seminars	Consult Graduate Timetable on Philosophy Website
SSHRC Doctoral Information Session	September 7 @10:30am
SSHRC Doctoral Application Deadline **Hard Deadline**	October 3, (11:59 p.m. Eastern)
Fall Mid Term Recess	October 10 to 16
SSHRC Master's Information Session	October, date TBA
2 nd Year M.A.s partial draft of thesis due to supervisor	End of October
1 st Year M.A.s 1-page draft thesis proposal due	November 1
SSHRC Master's Application Deadline (1 st year M.A.s and 4 th year UGs)	December 1
December Shutdown	December 24 to January 2
Start of Winter Classes	Consult Graduate Timetable on Philosophy Website
Winter Mid Term Recess	February 20 to 26
2 nd Year MAs complete 1 st draft thesis to supervisor for Spring convocation	End of February
2 nd Year MAs complete 1 st draft thesis to supervisor for Fall convocation	End of May
ALL Graduate Students must have yearly meeting with Supervisory Committee	By end of May

Program Information

The Department of Philosophy at McMaster offers both M.A. and Ph.D. programs.

M.A. Program

McMaster offers a stand-alone two-year M.A. Program. The mix of graduate courses and thesis research and writing is designed to prepare students for more advanced philosophical studies or for a professional career outside academia. The department offers a “fast-track” option, allowing students who are successful in their M.A. coursework to progress directly to the Ph.D. program after one year.

M.A. Admissions

Subject to the general regulations of the School of Graduate Studies, admission into the M.A. Program requires a B.A. (or comparable degree) with a minimum of “B+” standing, in Honours Philosophy or Honours Philosophy in Combination with Another Subject, or the equivalent. In particular, the applicant must have at least a “B+” average in the Philosophy courses taken in the final year of study. Generally, only applicants whose averages are clearly within the “A” range are offered admission.

Any applicant whose first language is not English must provide evidence of proficiency in English. Please see <https://gs.mcmaster.ca/academic-services/how-apply> under the Language Requirements tab for an enumeration of the exams and minimum scores that constitute sufficient evidence. The requirement to complete a standard test may be waived for students who have previously completed a post-secondary degree in a program where the primary language of instruction was English. To request such a waiver, please contact the department’s MA Advisor.

M.A. Program Requirements

Candidates are required to take six (6) graduate half-courses or the equivalent. A half-course lasts for one term and classes are usually held for two to three (2-3) hours weekly during the term. Our graduate courses are normally seminars. To stay in the program, candidates must achieve at least a “B-” standing in all courses taken. M.A. candidates at McMaster may take graduate Philosophy courses at the University of Guelph or at Wilfrid Laurier University.

Candidates are also required to write a thesis and to pass an oral examination on it. For further information about the MA thesis, see below.

M.A. Supervisory Committees

A candidate's supervisory committee is formed at the end of the first term of study. The committee will consist of a supervisor and second reader.

The functions of the supervisory committee include:

- assisting the candidate in planning the balance of a course of study;
- conducting annual reviews of the candidate's progress;
- supervising a candidate's thesis;
- examining the thesis in accordance with the regulations of the university.

Notwithstanding the responsibilities of the supervisor and the supervisory committee, the candidate is responsible for ensuring that program requirements and deadlines are met.

M.A. Thesis

Candidates are also required to write a thesis and to pass an oral examination on it. Master's theses must demonstrate a capacity for independent study and critical judgment. They are normally between 21,000 words and 35,000 words; a thesis which exceeds 35,000 words (including appendices, bibliography, and notes) will not be accepted unless permission is granted by the Department Chair and M.A. Advisor on the recommendation of the supervisory committee. Candidates are required to submit a one-page statement of the proposed thesis at the end of October. Shortly thereafter, based on this statement, the Department establishes a supervisory committee of two faculty members. Once the written thesis is judged acceptable for oral defense by the supervisory committee, a third examiner is appointed. The third examiner, together with the two members of the supervisory committee, constitute the Examining Committee. This committee is responsible for conducting an oral examination of the thesis. While the written thesis requires approval of both members of the supervisory committee, the performance of the candidate at the oral defence must be approved by a majority of the Examining Committee.

Note: The candidate's progress is initially monitored by the M.A. Advisor and/or the Chair of the Department. After a thesis topic has been decided upon and a thesis supervisor has been assigned, the supervisor also becomes involved in the monitoring process.

M.A. Timeline

Full-time M.A. students in the program are guaranteed funding for two years. This consists in both a Teaching Assistantship and University Graduate Scholarship funding, although in the second year the Scholarship is contingent on making satisfactory progress as explained below. The expectation is that students will normally complete the M.A. within these two years, and the Department cannot normally provide funding for M.A. students in their third year. The permissible time for completion of the degree is three years (9 terms) from your initial registration in the program.

The following timeline summarizes the Department's expectations for student progress:

Year One

First Term

- Take two or three courses; three is advisable if you wish to make timely progress.
- Draft a one-page thesis proposal and submit copies to the Department Chair and the M.A. Advisor by November 1st. We need enough detail to be able to appoint a supervisor and a second reader.
- Complete applications for eligible external graduate scholarships (SSHRC, CGS, OGS).
- Discuss possible supervisors for your thesis with the faculty concerned and with the M.A. Advisor.

Second Term

- Take two or three more courses; again, do three if you can.
- You should by now have been assigned a supervisor and a second reader for your thesis. (If not, contact the M.A. Advisor or Department Chair.)
- Arrange to meet with your supervisor and begin to discuss your research with him or her.

Summer Term

- You must have a meeting with your committee before the end of May of the first year. It is your responsibility to arrange the meeting. The committee will consist of your supervisor, your second reader, and either the M.A. Advisor or a delegate. (The latter will chair the meeting, but may also take part in the discussion of your progress.) Here you will have a chance to discuss in a back-and-forth way what you propose to do in your thesis.
- Start work on the thesis.

Year Two

First Term

- Apply for any external scholarships for which you are eligible (e.g. OGS, SSHRC) if you intend to go on to do doctoral work.
- Take any remaining courses. You need six in all.
- Aim to have a partial draft of your thesis (one or two chapters, for instance) in your supervisor's hands by the end of October.

Second Term

You may aim to complete your thesis for Spring Convocation, or for Fall Convocation. If you want to graduate with the Spring Convocation:

- You should submit the first complete draft of your thesis to your supervisor by the end of February, and the completed final copy to Graduate Studies in mid April. Please consult the [Graduate Studies Calendar](#) for the exact date for the current academic year. Please make yourself familiar with the **Procedure for Submitting M.A. Theses** (**found in Avenue to Learn**).
- If you meet these deadlines, we guarantee to read and examine your work in time for you to graduate in the Spring.
- By early March, you should complete a **Form Declaring Your Intent to Submit Your Thesis** for examination and defense (**found in Avenue to Learn**), and submit it to the Department

of Philosophy. You should also review the [Student Procedures for your M.A. Defense \(found in Avenue to Learn\)](#).

- Spring Convocation takes place in early June. Be advised that once you have completed all the requirements for the program you will receive no further scholarship money.

Summer Term

- You might need to have another meeting with your committee before the end of May of the second year. Please consult your supervisor and the M.A. Advisor to ascertain whether such a meeting will be required. It is your responsibility to arrange the meeting. The committee will consist of your supervisor, your second reader, and either the M.A. Advisor or a delegate to chair the meeting. The chair of the meeting may also take part in the discussion of your progress.
- To be sure of graduating in the **Fall Convocation**, you should submit the first complete draft of your thesis to your supervisor by the end of May, the version of your thesis that you are going to defend to the department by mid-August, and the approved final copy to Graduate Studies by late September. Please consult the [Graduate Studies Calendar](#) for the exact dates for the current academic year. Please make yourself familiar with the [Procedure for Submitting M.A. Theses \(found in Avenue to Learn\)](#).
- If you meet these deadlines, we guarantee to read and examine your work in time for you to graduate in the Fall, irrespective of whether you met the March 31st deadline for full funding. Again, make sure you are familiar with the School of Graduate Studies regulations. By early August, you should complete a form declaring your intent to submit your thesis (available through Dept office) for examination and defense, and submit it to the Department of Philosophy. You should also review the [Student Procedures for your M.A. Defense \(found in Avenue to Learn\)](#).
- Fall Convocation takes place mid-November. Be advised that once you have completed all the requirements for the program you will receive no further scholarship money.

M.A. to Ph.D. Fast-Tracking

Students in Year 1 of the M.A. Program may request to be admitted into Year 1 of the Philosophy Ph.D. Program after completing two terms of the M.A. Program. Reclassification as a Ph.D. student is normally conditional upon completion of six graduate half-courses with an overall A average, clear evidence of research ability, and the completion of a Major Research Project (MRP) by September 1. Preliminary discussions of a student's eligibility for reclassification will take place at the time of the student's first M.A. supervisory committee meeting in May, after which the M.A. Advisor will make a recommendation concerning reclassification to the Ph.D. Program Committee (minus the student member). The Ph.D. Program Committee will grant or deny conditional approval at that time. Final approval will be conditional upon satisfactory completion of the MRP, and the availability of a suitable supervisor. Supervisors and 2nd readers of students considered for reclassification will be responsible for assessing the student's MRP. Students will be officially reclassified following successful completion of the MRP.

The MRP

The supervisory committee of an M.A. student requesting reclassification as a Ph.D. student will decide, at the student's May meeting, on the nature of the MRP with a view to the student's ongoing research. Examples include a major research paper of 25 to 30 pages or an annotated bibliography. The MRP must be submitted to the student's M.A. supervisory committee by August 15, and committee members will submit a grade (Pass/Fail) to the M.A. Advisor by September 1. Students will be reclassified following successful completion of the MRP.

Part-time M.A. Timeline

Students may be admitted to the M.A. program on a part-time basis. The requirements for the part-time M.A. are the same as those for the full-time M.A., but the student completes them over a longer period, normally four years. The normal expectation is that the student complete two graduate half-courses each academic year; in any case, a part-time student may not complete more than three graduate half-courses in one academic year. Part-time M.A. students are not normally eligible for the McMaster Graduate Scholarship or for Teaching Assistantships. Please note that the scheduling of graduate classes varies from year to year, but that they normally occur within the hours of 9:30am and 6:30pm.

Ph.D. Program

McMaster's Doctoral Program in Philosophy offers courses of study leading to the degree of Ph.D. in philosophy. The program is designed so that students may quickly enter the excitement of their own research, while steadily building a solid foundation of comprehensive knowledge.

Ph.D. Admissions

Admission to the Ph.D. program requires an M.A. in Philosophy or an equivalent degree. There is also a possibility for students enrolled in McMaster's M.A. program in Philosophy to be accepted into the Ph.D. program without completing the M.A. degree, subject to their satisfying certain conditions for excellent progress in their first year. Selection is made by the Ph.D. Program Committee of the Department of Philosophy, and any student admitted comes under the general regulations of McMaster University.

Any applicant whose first language is not English must provide evidence of proficiency in English. Please see <https://gs.mcmaster.ca/academic-services/how-apply> under the Language Requirements tab for an enumeration of the exams and minimum scores that constitute sufficient evidence. The requirement to complete a standard test may be waived for students who have previously completed a post-secondary degree in a program where the primary language of instruction was English. To request such a waiver, please contact the department's MA Advisor.

Ph.D. Program Requirements

Area Requirements

Ph.D. candidates are required to demonstrate a comprehensive knowledge of the central areas of philosophy by demonstrating competence in 5 areas of philosophy from the 2 lists below. No more than three areas may be selected from one list:

Historical

Ancient and Medieval Philosophy
Modern Philosophy 1600 to 1800
Continental Philosophy from 1800
British and American Philosophy from 1800

Systematic

Ethics and Value Theory
Metaphysics and Epistemology
Social, Political, and Legal Philosophy
Logic, Philosophy of Language, and Philosophy of Science

Competence in a given area may be demonstrated by completing two graduate (one term) courses in the area with at least a B+ (or equivalent) in each course. Graduate courses completed before commencing the Ph.D. program can be counted towards satisfying the area requirements. The Ph.D. Advisor will determine into which of these areas of philosophy each course falls. A Major Research Paper, completed by a student fast-tracking from the MA program, may count as the equivalent of a single course for this purpose at the discretion of the Ph.D. Advisor. Normally the following are recognized as equivalents of two one-term courses:

- A successful M.A. thesis defense.
- A successful Ph.D. Qualifying Examination.
- A published paper, subject to approval by the Program Committee, provided that it appear in a peer-reviewed professional journal in philosophy (graduate-student edited journals are specifically excluded).
- A three-hour written examination on selected primary texts in the field. The examination may be repeated only once.

Competence in a discipline other than philosophy relevant to the student's research may substitute for competence in an area of philosophy - reducing the number of areas of philosophy required by (at most, typically) one - with permission of the Ph.D. Advisor. Such competence may be demonstrated in any of the ways specified immediately above.

Courses

Ph.D. students take six courses in total: five one-term courses, plus the Ph.D. Research Seminar in their second year. In special circumstances this load may be reduced, but all candidates must take at least four courses. Graduate students may select from Philosophy graduate courses at McMaster, Wilfrid Laurier University and University of Guelph.

Satisfactory performance in course work requires no grade lower than B-minus (or equivalent). A student receiving a grade lower than B-minus (or equivalent) shall be considered to be making unsatisfactory progress

Ph.D. Research Seminar

One of the candidate's six courses is the Ph.D. Research Seminar, which is normally completed in the second year. Its objectives are to ensure that all students in the PhD program possess the information and skills needed to succeed during the dissertation phase of the program and beyond, and to provide students with practice presenting their work and discussing each other's work. The seminar is offered under the direction of one faculty member, although all interested faculty and students are informed of the schedule and invited to attend when a student is presenting. Supervisors are expected to attend when their supervisee is presenting.

The final grade for the Seminar is pass/fail. Failure of the Ph.D. Research Seminar amounts to unsatisfactory progress and may result in withdrawal from the Program.

Demonstration of Competence

Students in the Ph.D. Program may be required to demonstrate competence in one or more skills which their Supervisory Committee decides, in consultation with the Ph.D. Advisor, to be necessary for their thesis (e.g. logic or a language other than English). The Supervisory Committee will normally decide on the type and level of competence required formally, at its first annual meeting with the student. However, the student should meet with his or her Supervisor as soon as possible after initial registration to determine which competencies, if any, the student is likely to be asked to demonstrate. Normally the student will demonstrate the required competencies before being allowed to proceed to a Qualifying Examination.

Qualifying Examination

The purpose of the Qualifying Examination (QE) is to ensure that the candidate has a viable thesis proposal and the background to carry it through successfully. In order to be eligible to take the QE, the student must have achieved (by the end of the 20th month in the program) a GPA on courses taken towards the Ph.D. of at least 9.5. The QE is an oral examination of the QE document that the student prepares in consultation with her Supervisor and the other members of her Supervisory Committee. This document must include the following:

Statement of Preparation: A 250-500 word written statement explaining how their courses, area selections, language proficiency, and other relevant knowledge (for instance in logic or other academic fields relevant to the proposed research) have prepared them for their thesis research. This statement should be appended to the Thesis Proposal.

Thesis Proposal: A written thesis proposal of no more than 3000-5000 words (not including bibliography) addressing the following points:

- The philosophical importance of the research and the candidate's anticipated contribution to the subject.
- A description of the insufficiency of alternative positions in the current literature.
- A clear statement of the problem that the dissertation proposes to treat and the

proposed strategy for addressing it (where possible, students should sketch the argument of the thesis).

- A working table of contents with a sketch of what each chapter contributes to the overall argument of the dissertation.
- A working bibliography of the primary and secondary literature.

QE Timeline

Doctoral students are expected to submit a draft QE document to their supervisor no later than the 17th month of enrollment in the Program (typically, the end of January of the second year). Students who are unable to meet this expectation must notify the Ph.D. Advisor via e-mail. To remain in the Ph.D. Program, the student must pass the QE by the end of the 24th month of enrollment (typically the end of August of the second year). Any student unable to meet this deadline due to medical or personal emergencies is advised to consult the Ph.D. Advisor to discuss the possibility of petitioning the School of Graduate Studies (SGS) for an extension. Note that SGS's discretion to grant such requests is strictly limited to exigent circumstances.

A student who fails her first QE may attempt the QE a second time, but only if there is adequate time to do so before the end of the 24-month deadline for passing the QE. To ensure adequate time for a second attempt, the student is advised to schedule her first QE by the end of the 21st month of enrollment (typically May of the second year). Students who fail the second attempt will not be allowed to remain in the Program.

QE Format and Criteria for Examiners

The Qualifying Exam (QE) is an oral exam based on a written thesis proposal. The oral exam begins with a brief overview of the project by the student (max. 10 minutes). It then proceeds to questions from the supervisory committee. The supervisory committee serves as the examining committee.

The supervisory committee's task at the QE is to assess the viability of the thesis project and whether the student is adequately prepared to undertake it. Specifically, examiners should determine:

- Whether the candidate is adequately prepared, including familiarity with basic and current research trends.
- Whether the proposed thesis is likely to make a significant contribution to the literature in its area.
- Whether the thesis as proposed will be of appropriate length, complexity, and difficulty.
- Whether the proposed strategy is cogent.

The examiners will make their judgment as to the success of the examination on the basis of both the written document and the candidate's performance in the oral examination. The outcome of the QE is reported to the School of Graduate Studies as "Pass with Distinction", "Pass", or "Fail".

Thesis and Defense

The student prepares the thesis in consultation with the supervisor and the other members of the supervisory committee. With the approval of the supervisory committee, the finished work is submitted to an external examiner. Upon approval by the external examiner, the thesis is defended before members of the supervisory committee and the external examiner. A thesis which exceeds 90,000 words (including appendices, bibliography, and notes) will not be accepted unless permission is granted by the Ph.D. Program Committee on the recommendation of the supervisory committee.

Supervisory Committees

The supervisory committee is comprised of the student's supervisor together with two (or in rare cases three) other members. The supervisor has primary responsibility for monitoring the student's progress. Until such time as the supervisory committee has been appointed, its function will be carried out by the Ph.D. Advisor.

The supervisor must be declared within the first 5 months of registration in the program. The complete supervisory committee must be declared before the student's first annual meeting in May of the first year, or in any case within 12 months of starting the program.

The functions of the supervisory committee include:

- assisting the candidate in planning the balance of a course of study;
- conducting annual reviews of the candidate's progress;
- conducting the candidate's Qualifying Examination;
- supervising a candidate's thesis;
- recommending external examiners to the Program Committee;
- examining the thesis in accordance with the regulations of the university.

Notwithstanding the responsibilities of the Supervisor and the Supervisory Committee, the candidate is responsible for ensuring that Program requirements and deadlines are met.

Ph.D. Timeline

The Program is designed to be completable within four years. Full-time Ph.D. students in the Program are guaranteed funding for four years, provided they make satisfactory progress. Over the last few years, the department has been able to extend full or part funding to all full-time fifth- and sixth-year students in good standing. The department is committed to continuing this practice where its resources allow, but it cannot guarantee full funding to students beyond the fourth year.

The following timeline summarizes the Program's expectations for student progress:

Year One

First Term

- Meet with the Ph.D. Advisor before the start of term, or as soon as possible after classes

begin, for advice about courses and meeting area requirements and to have your course selections officially approved.

- Take two or three courses.
- Apply for external scholarships (SSHRC and OGS) by means of a single common application, if you are eligible
- In consultation with the Ph.D. Advisor, arrange for a thesis supervisor.
- Determine with your supervisor whether you will have to establish competence in logic or one or more languages other than English before your Qualifying Examination. If you intend to write a thesis on a philosopher who wrote in a language other than English, you will probably have to demonstrate competence in that language. If so, consider whether you should begin formal study of that language now. Graduate students can audit, or take for credit, undergraduate language courses at no extra charge.
- With the Ph.D. Advisor and your supervisor, arrange for the other members of your Supervisory Committee.

Second Term

- Take the remainder of your five courses other than the Ph.D. Research Seminar (make sure you meet the Area Requirements).
- Complete your supervisory committee.
- Ask your course professors or supervisor if any papers you have submitted for courses would be appropriate for reworking for publication.

Summer Term

- Schedule your annual supervisory committee meeting, to take place in May, with your Supervisory Committee, the Ph.D. Advisor, and the Graduate Administrator. Here is where you will be told definitely whether you need to demonstrate any special competencies. You will have a chance to discuss your plans for the summer and what you propose to do in your dissertation.
- Begin or continue study for your language or logic exam, if one is required.
- Begin preparation of your dissertation proposal.

Year Two

- Take the Ph.D. Research Seminar (September to April).
- Complete any other remaining coursework (you need six courses in total, including the Ph.D. Research Seminar).
- Apply for external scholarships (SSHRC and OGS) by means of a single common application, if you are eligible.
- Continue study for your language or logic exam, if one is required.
- Write your Qualifying Examination document (QE document). Submit a draft of your QE document to your supervisor by the end of your 17th month in the Program (typically January of your second year). Expect to prepare several drafts and to run them past your supervisor before your proposal is acceptable for the Qualifying Examination.
- Take your language or logic exam, if required. The Ph.D. Advisor will arrange this at your request.

- Schedule your annual supervisory committee meeting, to take place in May.
- Take your Qualifying Examination (QE), at which you will defend your thesis proposal (see the section above titled “Qualifying Examination” for details). This normally takes place in May. You may retake the exam once. However, absent special circumstances, you must pass your QE by the end of August to remain in the program.
- Begin writing your thesis once you have passed your QE.

Year Three

- Apply for external scholarships (SSHRC and OGS) by means of a single common application, if you are eligible.
- Work on your thesis. The usual procedure is to submit a chapter at a time to your supervisor for comments, which you accommodate in a revised version. Expect several cycles of comments and revisions. Ordinarily the other members of the supervisory committee do not see a chapter until the supervisor has accepted it. This pattern varies and should be negotiated in advance with your supervisory committee.
- Arrange your annual meeting in May with your Supervisory Committee.

Year Four

- Apply for SSHRC and OGS if you are eligible and expect to be back for a fifth year.
- Complete your thesis. A good target is to have a finished draft by January of year four. This gives time for revisions, for nomination by your supervisory committee of an external examiner, and for the external examiner to read and prepare a report.
- Defend your thesis. (If you do it soon enough, you will not need an annual meeting in May with your supervisory committee.)
- Throughout, you should be trying to produce work which merits publication in a respectable journal. Publication helps your employment prospects and starts your research career. Whenever you have work which you think is of sufficient quality, show it to your supervisor (or other faculty) and receive their opinion as to its suitability for publication. Your supervisor or other faculty members should be able to advise you on appropriate places to send it.

Graduate Funding for both Master’s and Doctoral Programs

Teaching Assistantships, Scholarships, and Other Employment

All incoming students (both Canadian residents and all international students) are guaranteed funding for the length of their program. Master’s students receive two years of funding and Doctoral students receive four years. This funding is subject to satisfactory progress in the program. Funding normally consists of a combination of three sources:

1. All incoming students receive a baseline amount of **McMaster Graduate Scholarship (MGS)** from the School of Graduate Studies or an external funding package that equals or exceeds baseline MGS funding. All funding is subject to sufficient progress in the program and is automatically renewed for up to two years (M.A. students) or for up to four years (Ph.D. students).

2. All students are eligible to work as **Teaching Assistants** for courses in the Philosophy Department, or occasionally a partner program at McMaster. Students may sometimes work as Research Assistants, in lieu of working as Teaching Assistants. Such opportunities are subject to funding and availability and cannot be guaranteed. Ph.D. students who have passed the QE-exam are eligible to apply for a one-term Ph.D. Teaching Fellowship in lieu of teaching- assistant duties. Ph.D. Teaching Fellows teach an undergraduate philosophy course as the instructor of record.
3. All eligible students are expected to apply each year for **scholarship funding from other sources** in the form of both Ontario Graduate Scholarships ([OGS](#)) and Doctoral Fellowships from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council ([SSHRC Doctoral](#)) and ([SSHRC Masters](#)) through a common application. McMaster students have had an excellent track record for receiving these awards as well as other sources of external funding.

Employment Regulations for Full Time Students

Full-time graduate students participating in McMaster-based paid employment are limited to twenty hours per week on average. This employment includes, but is not limited to: Teaching Assistant positions (or RA in lieu positions), Sessional Lecturer positions, and other Research Assistant positions. Payroll monitors the total hours students work on campus in any given academic year. Refer to the School of Graduate Studies Calendar, [section 2.5.4, Employment Regulations](#). Those who exceed the limit will be asked to switch to part-time status (with consequent loss of scholarship and no reduction of full-time fees).

See [McMaster University's Regulations for Full- and Part-time Status Section 2.5.3](#) for further details.

Academic Travel Subsidies

Scholarly conferences provide an excellent opportunity to present the results of your research to the relevant philosophical community. Students should consider writing up their best work for submission to appropriate conferences. Doing so is particularly important for students pursuing an academic career.

Each graduate student who has a paper accepted at a **peer-reviewed philosophy conference** is eligible for funding for travel and room costs, subject to the availability of funds. Please complete the Department of **Philosophy Travel Funds application (found in Avenue to Learn)**, which gives us a rough estimate of your anticipated expenses.

Graduate students wishing to attend (but not to present at) conferences considered by their supervisor to be central to their research activity should consult the Chair about the possibility of modest support.

In addition to the above, limited funds for conference purposes may also be available from the [Graduate Students Association](#) and the [School of Graduate Studies Yates Scholarship Fund](#).

Graduate Courses

Topics courses differ in content from year to year and, under different descriptions, may be taken a second time for credit. A topics course may not be taken for credit by a student who has already

received credit for the same topic under a course listed in a previous calendar. Candidates should consult the Chair for the specific offerings in a given year. 600-level courses, which are also available to senior undergraduate students at the 400-level, may be offered for graduate credit. Graduate students will be required to complete extra work as detailed in the course outline in addition to that required of undergraduate students.

- PHILOS 6A03 / Early Modern Philosophy
- PHILOS 6B03 / Seminar in Ethics
- PHILOS 6C03 / Philosophy of Constitutional Law
- PHILOS 6D03 / Twentieth Century Analytic Philosophy
- PHILOS 6F03 / Issues in Continental Philosophy
- PHILOS 6I03 / Medieval Philosophy
- PHILOS 6K03 / Seminar in Ancient Philosophy
- PHILOS 6XX3 / Intermediate Logic
- PHILOS 6T03/ Special Topics in Philosophy
- PHILOS 720 / Reading Course
- PHILOS 721 / Reading Course
- PHILOS 731 / Special Studies in Philosophy
- PHILOS 743 / Graduate Seminar I
- PHILOS 744 / Graduate Seminar II
- PHILOS 750 / Ancient Philosophy
- PHILOS 751 / Medieval Philosophy
- PHILOS 752 / Modern British Philosophy (1600-1900)
- PHILOS 753 / Early Modern European Philosophy 1600-1800)
- PHILOS 754 / Kant
- PHILOS 755 / 19th Century European Philosophy
- PHILOS 756 / Recent European Philosophy
- PHILOS 757 / 20th Century British Philosophy
- PHILOS 758 / American Philosophy
- PHILOS 759 / Selected Topics in Applied Ethics
- PHILOS 760 / Logic & Argumentation
- PHILOS 761 / Philosophy of Language
- PHILOS 762 / Metaphysics
- PHILOS 763 / Epistemology
- PHILOS 764 / Social & Political Philosophy
- PHILOS 765 / Ethical Theory
- PHILOS 766 / Philosophy of Religion
- PHILOS 767 / Aesthetics
- PHILOS 769 / Philosophy of Law
- PHILOS 770 / Philosophy of Education
- PHILOS 771 / Philosophy of Science

Graduate Student Activities and Department Life

Speaker Series

The Department hosts a weekly speaker-series, at which visiting speakers present their work on a range of topics in philosophy. McMaster faculty members and Ph.D. students nearing the completion of their studies also sometimes present in the speaker series. Talks normally take place on Friday afternoons at 3:30 during the teaching term. The speaker-series talks are preceded and followed by social events, at which the department community can come together. The weekly speaker-series is an important component of graduate philosophical education, and it is integral to the maintenance of the department's intellectual community. For these and other reasons, all MA and Ph.D. students are encouraged to regularly attend these weekly talks.

Conferences and Workshops

The Department regularly hosts national and international conferences and workshops. Graduate students are frequently involved in these events, as both presenters and organizers.

Reading Groups

At any given time, there are usually several reading groups in progress in the Department. Students are warmly encouraged to attend, and to initiate reading groups of their own.

Professionalization

The Department runs workshops focused on various aspects of professionalization, such as presenting at conferences, publishing, and demystifying the academic job market. Students applying to academic jobs are also encouraged to work closely with the Department's Placement Officer. The Department organizes mock interviews for job candidates who receive interviews, including recent graduates.

Representation

All graduate students are welcome to attend department meetings and are considered full members of the community. The Chair holds regular informal meetings with the graduate student community, open to all who wish to attend. Three graduate student representatives serve as a first point of contact for various concerns, and occasionally organize social events. Graduate students also serve on several department committees, such as the speaker series and admissions committees.

Associated Programs and Opportunities

McMaster houses the [Institute for Ethics and Policy Innovation \(IEPI\)](#), a major centre for global health care ethics research. The director, Claudia Emerson, is an Associate Professor in the Philosophy Department. Some graduate students work for IEPI as research fellows. In addition, McMaster houses the [Bertrand Russell Research Centre](#), and is home to the [Russell Archives](#). The department regularly hosts visiting scholars and events in the history of analytic philosophy. The Department houses a vibrant community of students and faculty working in legal and political philosophy and is a member of the [Ontario Legal Philosophy Partnership](#). Graduate students (both M.A. and Ph.D.) have the opportunity to supplement their studies with diplomas in [Gender Studies and Feminist Research](#) (GSFR) and in [Water Without Borders](#).

Additional Information:

Graduate Work Supervision Guidelines for Faculty and Students

The relationship between the graduate student and supervisor/advisor is unique and provides a remarkable opportunity to guide and mentor the student engaged in advanced academic learning. What is considered 'good' supervision will vary from discipline to discipline, and it naturally evolves as the student advances through a graduate program. This document provides suggestions to initiate, promote, and sustain [successful student-supervisor/advisor relationships](#).

School of Graduate Studies / Resources

Forms and Guides <https://gs.mcmaster.ca/current-students/resources/>

Student Accessibility Services

McMaster is committed to the accommodation of students with disabilities in accordance with the terms of The Ontario Human Rights Code. Students who require academic accommodation are encouraged to contact Student Accessibility Services (<http://sas.mcmaster.ca/>) as early as possible in their program to put in place the supports they need. Details of the policy on academic accommodation is available here: [Student Accessibility Services](#)

Academic Integrity

This Policy governs academic behaviour of graduate students and faculty and the handling of matters pertaining to academic dishonesty.

[Academic Integrity](#)

Policy on Discrimination and Harassment

This document outlines McMaster University policies on maintaining and promoting an atmosphere free of harassment and discrimination. [Policy on Discrimination and Harassment](#)