



**Department of
Philosophy 2023 - 2024
Graduate Handbook**

Table of Contents

Message from the Chair.....	1
Contact Information.....	2
Sessional Dates 2023-2024	3
Convocation Dates	4
Important dates within the department	5
Program Information	6
M.A. Program.....	6
M.A. Admissions.....	6
M.A. Program Requirements	6
M.A. Supervisory Committees	6
M.A. Thesis.....	7
M.A. Timeline.....	7
Year One.....	7
First Term	7
Second Term	8
Summer Term	8
Year Two	8
First Term	8
Second Term	8
Summer Term	8
M.A. to Ph.D. Fast-Tracking	9
The Major Research Project (MRP).....	9
Part-time M.A. Timeline.....	9
Ph.D. Program	10
Ph.D. Admissions.....	10
Ph.D. Program Requirements	10
Courses.....	10
Area Requirements	10
Ph.D. Seminar.....	11
Demonstration of Competence / Language Requirement	11
Qualifying Examination (QE)	12
Qualifying Exam Timeline.....	12
Exam Format and Criteria for Examiners	13
Thesis and Defense	13
Supervisory Committee	13

Ph.D. Timeline	14
Year One.....	14
First Term	14
Second Term	15
Summer Term	15
Year Two	15
Year Three.....	15
Year Four	16
Funding (for both Master’s and Doctoral Programs).....	16
Teaching Assistantships, Scholarships, and Other Employment	16
Full-Time Status and Employment Regulations	17
Academic Conference Travel Support	17
Teaching Opportunities and Teacher Training.....	17
Teaching Assistantships:	18
Information and Training:	18
Instructor Opportunities:.....	18
Graduate Student Teaching Awards:	18
Resources:.....	19
Graduate Courses	20
Graduate Student Activities and Department Life.....	21
Speaker Series.....	21
Conferences and Workshops	21
Reading Groups.....	21
Professionalization.....	21
Placement	21
Representation	21
Associated Programs and Opportunities	21
Additional Information and Useful Links:	22
Graduate Work Supervision Guidelines for Faculty and Students	22
School of Graduate Studies / Resources.....	22
The Graduate Calendar	22
Student Accessibility Services (SAS).....	22
The Graduate Students’ Association (GSA).....	22
CUPE 3906.....	22
Academic Integrity	22
Policy on Discrimination and Harassment	22

Message from the Chair

Welcome to the Department of Philosophy at McMaster University! We are 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 programs. Our 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 department staff, should you have questions about the details contained here.

Warmest wishes,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'M. Johnstone', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mark Johnstone
Chair, Department of Philosophy
McMaster University

Contact Information

Department of Philosophy
University Hall 310
1280 Main Street West
Hamilton, ON L8S 4K1

Phone (905) 525-9140

Contact Information		
Chair	Dr. Mark Johnstone	chphil@mcmaster.ca ext. 23461
Ph.D. Advisor	Dr. Alice Pinheiro Walla	phdphil@mcmaster.ca ext. 23459
M.A. Advisor	Dr. Barry Allen	maphil@mcmaster.ca ext. 23463
Program Manager	Kristina Vukelic	philadm@mcmaster.ca ext. 24275
Graduate Administrative Assistant	Alina Dawood	phlosdep@mcmaster.ca ext. 24312
Undergraduate Administrative Assistant	Maheen Malik	ugphil@mcmaster.ca ext. 26445

Please note:

- Many of the resources mentioned in this guide can be found on the “Philosophy Department Portal” on Avenue to Learn. To navigate there, log in to Avenue ([link](#)) and select Continuing > Philosophy Department Portal.
- In addition to the Philosophy Department Portal, the department also maintains a “Philosophy Graduate Professionalization” page on Avenue. This contains resources related to academic and non-academic job searches and employment.
- The Graduate Handbook can 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 2023-2024

[\(link\)](#)

DEADLINE DATES FOR GRADUATE PROGRAMS	<u>FALL TERM</u>	<u>WINTER TERM</u>	<u>SUMMER TERM</u>
		September - December 2023 September - October, 2023 (1HF) November - December 2023 (2HF)	January - April, 2024 January - February, 2024 (1HF) March - April, 2024(2HF)
On-Time Registration	Tuesday, July 4 to Tuesday, August 1	Thursday, November 23 to Thursday, December 7	Thursday, March 28 to Thursday, April 11
Class Start Dates *	Classes begin on or after September 1, 2023- check with program for details	Classes begin on or after January 2, 2024- check with program for details	Class start dates vary - check with program for details
Late Registration (late fees apply)	August 2 to September 6	December 8 to January 2	April 12 to April 27
Final Dates to Add Courses:			
	Multi-term Courses	September 22	
	Single-term or 1HF Courses	September 22	January 19
	2HF Course	October 20	February 23
Final Dates to Drop Courses: **			
	Multi-term Courses	February 23	July 26
	Single-term Courses	November 10	March 15
	1HF Courses	October 6	February 9
	2HF Courses	December 8	April 5
Final Dates to Submit Grades:			
	Multi-term Courses		May 1
	Single-term Courses	January 5	May 1
	1HF Courses	October 20	February 23
	2HF Courses	January 5	May 1
Final Date to Submit Results of Incomplete (INC) Grades for Previous Term with Permission of Associate Dean	March 1	July 5	November 1
Deadline for Term Work to Be Submitted	December 22	April 26	August 30

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://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/app/uploads/2019/02/Academic-Accommodation-for-Religious-Indigenous-and-Spiritual-Observances-Policy-on.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.

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 enroll in or cancel a course 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 time frames 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 4 to August 1
Graduate students' meetings with M.A. or Ph.D. Advisor	Mid-August to September 1
TA Orientation – Department Events	August 31 & September 1
Welcome Day – Department Events	September 1
Start of Fall UG Classes	September 5
Start of Graduate Seminars	Consult Graduate Timetable on Philosophy Website
SSHRC Doctoral Information Session	Friday, Sept 8, 1-2pm
SSHRC Doctoral Application Deadline (strict)	Monday, October 2
Fall Mid Term Recess	October 9 to 15
SSHRC Master's Information Session	TBC
2 nd Year M.A.s partial draft of thesis due to supervisor	End of October
1 st Year M.A.s 1-page thesis proposal due (for determining supervisory committee)	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 19 to 25
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. With permission of the M.A. Advisor, students may take up to two of their six courses outside Philosophy. M.A. candidates at McMaster may also take Philosophy 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 before 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 to the MA Advisor by **November 1**. 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, assuming satisfactory progress. This consists of both a Teaching Assistantship and University Graduate Scholarship funding. The expectation is that students will complete the M.A. within these two years, and the Department cannot normally provide funding for M.A. students in their third year. The maximum permissible time for completion of the degree is three years (9 terms) from 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.
- Discuss possible supervisors for your thesis with the faculty concerned and with the M.A. Advisor.

- Draft a one-page thesis proposal and submit a copy to 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 external graduate scholarships, if eligible (SSHRC, CGS, OGS).

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 them.

Summer Term

- You must have a meeting with your supervisory 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, and may also take part in the discussion of your progress.) Here you will have a chance to discuss how your first two terms have gone, your plans for the summer, and what you propose to do in your thesis.
- In communication with your supervisor, start work on the thesis. A typical goal might be to have a detailed outline of the thesis and a working bibliography by the end of August.

Year Two

First Term

- Take any remaining courses. You need six in all.
- Apply for any external scholarships for which you are eligible (e.g. OGS, SSHRC) if you intend to go on to do doctoral work.
- Work on your thesis. A typical goal might be to have drafts of 1-2 chapters of your thesis to your supervisor by the end of the term.

Second Term

- Take any remaining courses. You need six in all.
- Work on your thesis. A typical goal might be to have a complete first draft of your thesis to your supervisor by the end of term.

Summer Term

- Complete and defend your thesis.
- To be sure of graduating in the **Fall Convocation** (the standard timeline), you should submit a 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 **mid-September**, following your defence. 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).
- It is also possible to graduate with the **Spring Convocation**. To achieve this, you would need to complete all degree requirements by mid to late April. Again, please consult the [Graduate Calendar](#) for the dates for the current academic year.
- Assuming you plan to graduate with the Fall Convocation, 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 office. You should also review the **Student Procedures for your M.A. Defense** (found in Avenue to Learn).

- Depending on your progress, you *might* need to have another meeting with your supervisory 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.
- Be advised that once you have completed all the requirements for the program, including defending your thesis, 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 Major Research Project (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 as Ph.D. students 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. 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 completes 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. 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 Ph.D. Advisor.

Ph.D. Program Requirements

Courses

Ph.D. students must take six courses in total: five one-term courses, plus the Ph.D. Seminar in their second year. Graduate students may select from Philosophy graduate courses at McMaster, Wilfrid Laurier University, and the 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

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

Systematic

Ethics and Value Theory

Metaphysics and Epistemology

Continental Philosophy from 1800
British and American Philosophy from 1800

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 appears 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.

Ph.D. Seminar

One of the candidate's six courses is the Ph.D. Seminar, which is normally completed in the second year. This course is required for all year-2 Ph.D. students, and is open only to them. Its objectives are to ensure that all students in the Ph.D. 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 to an audience and discussing each other's work. The seminar is offered under the direction of a faculty member, although all interested faculty and students are welcome 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. Seminar amounts to unsatisfactory progress and may result in withdrawal from the Program.

Demonstration of Competence / Language Requirement

Students in the Ph.D. Program may be required to demonstrate competence in one or more skills their Supervisory Committee decides, in consultation with the Ph.D. Advisor, to be necessary for their thesis research (e.g. logic or a language other than English). The Supervisory Committee will decide on the type and level of competence required. However, the student should meet with their 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 be required to demonstrate the required competencies before being allowed to proceed to a Qualifying Examination.**

The language requirement applies only to PhD students whose thesis research requires competence in a language other than English: typically, students writing their doctoral dissertations on historical figures who wrote in a language other than English. The point of the requirement is to ensure that such students are able to examine the original words of the thinker they discuss and to make judgments as to the suitability of the translations they are working with. If a given passage is important for their work, they should be able to consult the original language and judge the suitability of the translation, or offer an alternative translation of the word or passage in question.

The normal way to demonstrate competence in a language other than English – or in another skill deemed necessary for the student’s research – is by means of an exam administered by a faculty member. The standard format for a language exam is about a page of philosophical prose to be translated into English with the help of a dictionary in 90 minutes. A formal course of language study may substitute for such an exam with the approval of the supervisor (in consultation with the committee) and the PhD Advisor. Should an exam be required, the Ph.D. Advisor will help arrange it.

Qualifying Examination (QE)

The Qualifying Exam (QE) is an oral exam based on a written thesis proposal. The purpose of the exam is to ensure that the candidate has a viable thesis project and the background preparation 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. In advance of the Qualifying Exam, the student prepares a written thesis proposal in consultation with their Supervisor and Supervisory Committee.

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

- 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).
- The philosophical importance of the research and the candidate’s anticipated contribution to the subject.
- An account of the relevant / current literature.
- 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.

Qualifying Exam Timeline

Doctoral students are expected to submit a first draft of their thesis proposal to their supervisor **by the end of January in their second year**. Students normally complete the Qualifying Exam in **May of their second year**. Under McMaster regulations, Ph.D. students *must* pass their Qualifying Exam **no later than the 24th month of enrollment**: typically 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. SGS's discretion to grant such requests is limited to exigent circumstances.

A student who fails their 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 strongly advised to schedule their first QE in May of the second year. Students who fail the second attempt will not be allowed to remain in the Program.

Exam Format and Criteria for Examiners

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, based on the thesis proposal. 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 in the area.
- Whether the proposed thesis is likely to make a 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 Committee

The supervisory committee is comprised of the student's supervisor together with two (or in rare cases three) other members. With the permission of the Ph.D. Advisor, one member of the committee can be based outside the Philosophy Department. In rare cases, and with permission of the Dean of Graduate Studies, one committee member can be from outside McMaster.

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 Ph.D. Program is designed to be completed within four years. Full-time Ph.D. students in the Program are guaranteed funding for four years, provided they make satisfactory progress. The department can often extend partial funding to 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 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 course selection and to have your selections officially approved.
- Take two or three courses.
- Apply for external scholarships (SSHRC and OGS), 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 during your first year 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.
- Study for your language or logic exam, if one is required.
- Begin preparation of your dissertation proposal.

Year Two

- Take the Ph.D. Seminar (September to April).
- Complete any other remaining coursework (you need six courses in total, including the Ph.D. Seminar).
- Apply for external scholarships (SSHRC and OGS), if you are eligible.
- Continue study for your language or logic exam, if one is required.
- Write your Qualifying Examination document (i.e. your thesis proposal – see information above). 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.
- 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”). This should normally take place in May, at the same time as your annual meeting. 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), 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 scholarships if you are eligible and expect to be back for a fifth year.
- Complete your thesis. A good target is to have a complete 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.
- Only if you will require all or part of a fifth year to complete the program: arrange your annual meeting in May with your Supervisory Committee.

Throughout, students should try to produce work which merits presentation at a conference or publication in a respectable journal. Publication helps employment prospects and starts one's 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 on its suitability for publication. Your supervisor or other faculty members should be able to advise you on appropriate venues.

Funding (for both Master's and Doctoral Programs)

Teaching Assistantships, Scholarships, and Other Employment

All incoming students (domestic and international) are guaranteed funding for the length of their program, subject to making satisfactory progress. Master's students receive two years of funding and Doctoral students receive four years. 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. Sums are specified in the offer or funding letter. All funding is subject to sufficient progress in the program. Funding 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 (RA in lieu opportunities are subject to funding and availability and cannot be guaranteed). For further information about TA work at McMaster, including pay and benefits, see [here](#) and [here](#).
 - Ph.D. students in years 3 and above 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. For more information, see below.
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 an excellent track record of receiving these awards, and other sources of external funding.

Full-Time Status and Employment Regulations

See Section 2.5. of the Graduate Calendar ([link](#)). Quote from the 23-24 Calendar:

“Full-time graduate students are expected to pursue their graduate degree on a full-time basis and make satisfactory progress toward timely completion of all program requirements. It is not possible, or desirable, for the university to monitor and enforce the employment activities of its graduate students outside the university. However, it is both possible and desirable for the university to ensure that it does not itself create a structural situation that jeopardizes the ability of the graduate student to make full-time progress towards the completion of graduate program requirements. Accordingly, it is recommended that full-time students who are participating in McMaster-based paid employment should work no more than an average of 20 hours a week to a maximum of 1005 hours in the academic year. Full-time graduate students are responsible to ensure that any employment obligations do not interfere with academic progress and should be aware that employment obligations are not an acceptable basis for unsatisfactory progress.

As defined in Section 2.5.2, the University considers full-time students to be those that have their studies as their main activity. All full-time students must be available to conduct research (as appropriate), and to participate in courses and the other activities required by their program.”

Academic Conference Travel Support

The department encourages its graduate students to participate in academic conferences. Conferences provide students with an excellent opportunity to present the results of their research to the relevant philosophical community; to meet and converse with scholars from other academic communities; and to learn about research trends in their fields.

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. Departmental support for conference travel is normally limited to **\$750 per student per year**. Both MA and PhD students are eligible. 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](#).

Teaching Opportunities and Teacher Training

The department places great value on the contributions our graduate students make to our undergraduate programs in their roles as Teaching Assistants and (for some PhD students) instructors in our department. We also recognize that teaching is a skill that is learned and developed over time. We do our best to support our graduate students as they develop as teachers.

Teaching Assistantships:

All graduate students in the department have opportunities to work as Teaching Assistants. Typically, this involves leading two tutorials a week with up to 20 students in each. Some TAs are employed as graders, rather than leading tutorials. All TAs work under the supervision of an instructor, who should allocate and explain your TA duties for their course at the start of term. Students are invited to express preferences for courses for TA work during the summer, and the department tries to accommodate.

Information and Training:

All new TAs (new to teaching at McMaster) are required (and paid) to complete **TA training**. This takes two distinct forms:

- Online centrally-offered modules (5 hours). Paid through payroll, in addition to the regular TA contract hours. Required for all new TAs (new to teaching at McMaster).
- In-person departmental training at orientation (3 or 4 hours). Organized and offered by the department. Paid by carve-out from the Fall term hours on the “hours of work” form.
- The department also provides a TA Guide (Avenue to Learn, Philosophy Department Portal)
- The MacPherson Institute also provides resources for TAs ([link](#)).

Many graduate students find working as a TA to be among the most rewarding aspects of their graduate studies. However, it can also be challenging and stressful, especially at first. Graduate students in the department are warmly encouraged to reach out to their supervisor/instructor, to more experienced graduate student TAs, or to others in the department for support and advice.

Instructor Opportunities:

In addition to TA opportunities, the department also offers senior PhD students (year 3 and above) chances to teach their own course as instructor of record. In recent years, the department has been able to provide all PhD students wishing to teach their own course with at least one chance to do so.

PhD Teaching Fellowships:

- Each year, the department is permitted to allocate a set number of “PhD Teaching Fellowships” to its students. These Fellowships enable the department to assign courses to PhD students without having to advertise them as sessional positions. Normally, the department is permitted to distribute 3-5 such Fellowships each year. A list of available courses is circulated early in the summer and students are invited to apply and to express preferences.
- Preference is given to students in the fourth year, students in good standing, students with relevant expertise, and students who have not had a chance to teach their own course before.

Sessional instructor opportunities:

- The department also sometimes advertises publically for sessional instructors to teach a single course. Graduate students are eligible for such positions and are encouraged to apply.

Graduate Student Teaching Awards:

The department administers annual Graduate Student Teaching Awards to honor the contributions our graduate students make to our undergraduate programs in their roles as TAs and instructors, and to help them build their profiles as teachers. Each year, we give an MA Teaching Assistant Award to an outstanding TA enrolled in our MA program and a PhD Teaching Assistant Award to an outstanding TA enrolled in our PhD program. In some years, a third award may also be given to a PhD student who was an outstanding Instructor for a course at McMaster. Each award is accompanied by a prize of \$300.

Eligibility:

- Awardees must have served as either a Teaching Assistant or Instructor in our department during the relevant academic year. They must be enrolled in either our MA or PhD program.
- Awardees must not have received a Graduate Student Teaching Award for the immediately preceding year. They are also not eligible to win awards in multiple categories in a single year.

Selection:

- Nominations for the awards are solicited at the end of the Winter term. Graduate students may be nominated only for classes in which their role included course delivery and/or discussion leadership (so, not for courses in which their role was grading only). Nominations are solicited from:
 - philosophy instructors
 - undergraduate students who took philosophy courses during the relevant year
 - graduate students who are nominating another graduate student for whom they served as a Teaching Assistant
- A selection committee composed of philosophy faculty members chooses a pool of finalists for each award on the basis of some or all of the following factors: the nominations, student course surveys, and input from the Department Chair. The details of this process vary from year depending on circumstances such as the number of nominations we receive.
- The finalists are invited to submit Teaching Statements to the selection committee. Submitting a Teaching Statement is not mandatory for remaining a finalist, but not submitting a Teaching Statement may place a finalist at a disadvantage.
- The selection committee chooses winners from among the finalists based on some or all of the following factors: the nominations, student course surveys, the Teaching Statements, and further input from philosophy faculty members. In the case of the PhD Instructor Award, the course outline and schedule of readings will also be considered. Again, the details of this process can vary from year to year due to circumstances such as the availability of student course surveys.

Resources:

- The [MacPherson Institute](#) runs regular courses and workshops on teaching. Some of their courses lead to certificates and accreditations. Do familiarize yourself with their site.

Graduate Courses

Topics courses differ in content from year to year and, under different descriptions, may be taken a second time for credit. 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 / History of 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
- PHILOS 772/ Design, Collaboration and Innovation in Philosophical Research

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 sometimes also present their work 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 strongly encouraged to regularly attend these weekly talks when they can.

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 regular workshops focused on various aspects of professionalization, such as presenting at conferences, publishing, and navigating the academic and non-academic job markets.

Placement

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 graduate diplomas in [Gender and Social Justice \(GSJ\)](#) and in [Water Without Borders](#).

Additional Information and Useful Links:

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

SGS home page: <https://gs.mcmaster.ca/>

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

The Graduate Calendar

For up-to date information on sessional dates and policies relating to graduate studies at McMaster, including policies governing supervision, Leaves of Absence, etc. Make sure you are accessing the current version.

<https://academiccalendars.romcmaster.ca/index.php>

Student Accessibility Services (SAS)

Students who require academic accommodation should contact Student Accessibility Services 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](#)

The Graduate Students' Association (GSA)

A useful portal for various matters, including the student health plan. <https://gsa.mcmaster.ca/>

CUPE 3906

Unit 1 represents the interests of McMaster Teaching Assistants. You can access the most recent Collective Agreement here. <https://cupe3906.org/>

Academic Integrity

This Policy governs academic behaviour of graduate students and faculty and the handling of matters pertaining to academic dishonesty. If you suspect plagiarism in a course for which you are serving as a TA, please bring this to the attention of your instructor. [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](#)