

**Graduate Studies Handbook for the  
Department of Philosophy  
at Rice University  
2021-22**

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## **I. Purpose of this Document:**

This Handbook provides general guidelines for doctoral students in Philosophy. It describes the typical course of study leading to the PhD degree in Philosophy and includes information on degree requirements, funding, departmental expectations, and mechanisms for evaluating, advancing, and dismissing students. It is concerned with standards and procedures specific to the Philosophy program. This document supplements, but does not replace, the University's General Announcements (<https://ga.rice.edu/graduate-students/academic-policies-procedures/>), which contain graduate school regulations governing students, including deadlines and additional requirements. It is the student's responsibility to become familiar with the contents of this Handbook. In addition to complying with the regulations stated in this Handbook, students must also comply with the General Announcements and the Code of Conduct (<https://sjp.rice.edu/code-of-student-conduct>).

In case there is conflicting information, university-wide regulations take precedence over department-wide regulations. When in doubt, students should seek help first at the department level (Graduate Administrator, Director of Graduate Studies, Advisor, or Department Chair) and then at the central administration level (office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies).

## **II. Funding:**

Typically, all students admitted to the PhD program receive fellowships renewable for five years, including full tuition waivers and stipends. Continuation of enrollment and funding are contingent on Satisfactory Progress. The criteria for Satisfactory Progress are found in Sections VI and VII.

## **III. Brief Timetable:**

A brief overview of the normal course of study leading toward the PhD degree is:

**Coursework Phase (First Two Years):** Completion of fourteen courses and the logic requirement

**Preparation for Dissertation Phase (Third Year):** Pass the Qualifying Examination and successfully defend a Dissertation Proposal

**Dissertation Phase (Fourth to Fifth or Sixth Year):** Work on dissertation and successfully defend the dissertation in a public oral examination

Other requirements include departmental service, self-reports, and presentations.

Section IV elaborates on the specific degree requirements involved in each of these stages and a timeline for Satisfactory Progress can be found in Section VI.

#### **IV. Degree Requirements:**

The departmental PhD degree requirements include ten categories. A short explanation of each requirement is below, followed by more details elaborating on each category. A comprehensive timeline for Satisfactory Progress is provided in Section VI. Two other important areas of professionalization, teaching and service, are discussed in Section X.

**Courses:** Students must complete 14 courses at the 500 level or above, and satisfy the logic requirement during the first two years. Typically, the courses are graduate seminars in the department.

**Logic Requirement:** Students must either complete PHIL 505 Mathematical Logic with a B- or better or pass a written examination demonstrating a comparable level of competence. PHIL 505 counts as one of the 14 courses to be completed.

**Department Service:** In years two through five, students are required to be Teaching Assistants or Research Assistants.

**Qualifying Examination:** Students are required to have an approved Qualifying Examination committee and should also have a reading list by **June 1<sup>st</sup> after the fourth semester**. They must pass the Qualifying Examination based on that list during their **fifth semester**, and declare a dissertation advisor. The Qualifying Exam Declaration and Declaration of Dissertation Advisor form can be found in Section XIII.

**Dissertation Proposal:** Students are required to pass an oral defense of a thesis proposal in their sixth semester.

**Special Area Requirements:** If the department judges it necessary for the thesis, students will be required to pass a language examination or a special examination in a content area outside of philosophy.

**Candidacy:** After a successful dissertation proposal defense, students must complete and submit a Petition for Doctoral Candidacy form to the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies. See the Graduate Program Administrator for assistance.

**Dissertation:** Students must complete a dissertation and pass a public defense of the dissertation.

**Self-reports:** Students are required to submit a brief self-report on their progress and plans at the end of each semester.

**Presentations:** Students are required to give a presentation each year appropriate to their status in the program.

Degree requirements are also posted in the General Announcements here:  
<https://ga.rice.edu/programs-study/departments-programs/humanities/philosophy/philosophy-phd/#requirementstext>

## Coursework

The department requires 14 approved courses for the PhD. The student decides, in consultation with the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS), the number of courses to enroll in each semester (i.e., whether to take three or four). Various factors come into play (e.g., what is being offered, how confident the student is in a given set of areas, whether there is one course the student wants to explore especially deeply, etc.). The minimum required enrollment to remain a full-time student in the program is nine credit hours per semester (typically three courses). Students on stipend or who will be paid to teach in the summer, are required to register for nine credit hours per semester and six research (PHIL 701 or PHIL 800) credit hours in summer) to maintain their stipend payments.

Students are required to consult with the DGS each semester prior to registering for courses.

With the approval of the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS), students may take one Advanced Independent Reading course per year OR one course in other Rice departments OR at the University of Houston if this is deemed by the DGS to be essential for the student's dissertation work.

Before a student can register for an Advanced Independent Reading course, the student and the supervising faculty member must set a syllabus that specifies which works the student will read and how much written work is required. A "short title" for the course of 30 characters or less, must be provided to the Graduate Program Administrator for submission to the Office of the Registrar. The "short title" of the Advanced Independent Reading course will appear on the student's transcript.

The Philosophy Department also accepts for credit toward the 14 required courses at least one course offered in the certificate program of the Center for the Study of Women, Gender, and Sexuality (<https://cswgs.rice.edu/>). The DGS may approve credit for a course outside the department that is philosophical in subject matter and beneficial to the student. In some cases, such a course may be required (see the Special Requirements section below).

In cases of exceptional qualification, students coming to the Rice PhD program with a prior Master's degree in philosophy may apply to use some previous courses toward the required 14 courses. Students may apply for one transfer credit per year of previous graduate work, with a maximum of two. The General Announcements provides guidelines regarding which institutions are eligible to provide transfer credit.

In courses, standards for achievement are set by each instructor. However, regarding a common understanding of what letter grades mean in reflecting “satisfactory progress,” two things may be said:

Writing and discussing philosophy are both important. Among the virtues we look for in both writing and discussion are exegetical precision (did you understand, e.g., Quine’s argument and reproduce it correctly?), critical competence (can you see where the argument is weak or questionable?), and original insight (can you say something about the problem of translation, and not just about what Quine says about translation?). Variations on these virtues are myriad, and the only way to develop them is to practice. In addition, some areas (such as the history of philosophy) place particular emphasis on scholarly and bibliographical skills. There is an expectation that students’ abilities in these areas will improve during their tenure in the program.

The level of achievement which is acceptable in the first semester of work (a 3.5 GPA) is not “Satisfactory Progress” in later semesters. Failing any course in any semester (i.e., receiving lower than a B-) is not compatible with Satisfactory Progress, and though it is not grounds for immediate discontinuation in the program (since that decision depends on the stage of the program, past performance, etc.), it *does* place the student on probationary status. In such a case, the department might either recommend or require that the student work toward completing the requirements for the Master’s degree rather than the PhD. (see the Master’s Degree in Section VIII).

### **The Logic Requirement**

Every student is required to demonstrate competence in mathematical logic. This can be done in two ways.

#### **(1) Complete PHIL 505 Mathematical Logic with a grade of B- or better.**

Nearly all students enroll in PHIL 505 during their first semester of coursework. PHIL 505 is offered each year and counts as one of the 14 graduate courses required for the PhD in Philosophy. Students attend the three hours of lecture with undergraduates for PHIL 305 and an additional hour per week exclusively for graduate students. In that hour, philosophical issues related to logic are pursued in more depth than is possible in PHIL 305.

A previous course in logic is usually sufficient preparation for PHIL 505. Students with insufficient preparation for PHIL 505 are sometimes advised to take PHIL 106 first, though this does not count toward the required 14 courses.

#### **(2) Pass a Logic Examination prior to enrollment.**

Entering students who have a very strong background in logic can satisfy the requirement on the basis of an examination given prior to enrollment. However, even students with a strong background may benefit from taking PHIL 505 as the approach to the material may differ.

## **Department Service**

In years two through five, students are required to be a Teaching Assistant (TA) or a Research Assistant (RA). Teaching assignments typically involve grading papers and examinations and conducting review sessions. In many cases TAs also have an opportunity to present a lecture and are involved in constructing examinations. Research Assistant duties may include indexing or editing, or assistance with departmental service, such as assisting organization of the colloquium series or the Ethics Bowl. The expected service should not require on average more than ten hours per week if completed in one semester, or five hours a week if completed over two semesters. In no case should the workload exceed 20 hours in any week. The Department Chair determines service assignments, typically at the end of the Spring semester for the following year. Because faculty expectations differ, all students should meet with the faculty members to whom they have been assigned at the beginning of each semester.

## **Qualifying Examination**

The Qualifying Examination (QE) is a closed book, no notes, take-home written examination, consisting of essay questions written by the QE Committee based on the reading list approved by the department. These reading lists usually specify between 1,500 and 2,500 pages of material comprising the central contributions to the subfield philosophy in which the student hopes to write a dissertation.

The QE consists of three parts and is graded as a whole. The student may take all three parts on one day, or spread them across two or three successive days. The questions are written so that they can be answered in two hours. However, students differ in how fast they can plan answers and write them out. Therefore, all students are allowed up to three hours to answer each part.

The Qualifying Examination is required to be taken by the end of the fifth semester.

Prior to the QE, Students are required to submit the Qualifying Examination Declaration form to the DGS before June 1st after the fourth semester. The form can be found in Section XIII and the department's website.

The form indicates the area of the QE, the chair of the Qualifying Examination Committee, the other members of the committee, and the intended date of the QE and is signed by the committee chair before being submitted to the DGS.

Students should normally have decided upon the philosophical subfield of their dissertation (e.g. ethics, metaphysics, philosophy of science, etc.) by the end of their second year. It is necessary, of course, to begin this process earlier. Prior to that time, students should approach a faculty member or members about serving as the Qualifying Examination Committee. With the advisor(s), the student develops the reading list which serves as the focus of study for the fifth semester leading up to the Qualifying Exam.

The Examination Committee is composed of at least two members of the department. Often the second member of the committee eventually also becomes the second and/or third official “readers” of the dissertation. The student and the advisor(s) can and should submit suggestions concerning the composition of the committee; the final decision belongs to the department.

Students who pass the Qualifying Examination are approved to continue to the Dissertation Proposal stage. The Department’s expectation is that students pass the Qualifying Examination by the end of their fifth semester, and that they successfully defend a dissertation proposal (see below) by the end of their sixth semester.

A student who does not pass the Qualifying Examination is allowed to retake it once, and must take and pass it by the end of the sixth semester. Failure to pass the Qualifying Examination by the end of the sixth semester will result in dismissal from the program. A student who does not pass the qualifying exam until the sixth semester, and a student who passes the qualifying exam in the fifth semester but does not successfully defend a thesis proposal in the sixth semester, must successfully defend a thesis proposal by the end of the seventh semester. A student who needs a second opportunity to take the Qualifying Examination should simultaneously be working on a Dissertation Proposal.

Failure to defend a thesis proposal by the end of the seventh semester will result in dismissal from the program.

It is important to note that the choice of an advisor or advisors in the Qualifying Examination process does not necessarily commit a student to that faculty member(s) as advisor(s) for the rest of their time in the program. Usually the advisor(s) for the Qualifying Exam remains as the dissertation advisor(s), and often the other committee member(s) becomes a member(s) of the dissertation committee, but sometimes changes are made as the student progresses through their research and writing, at the request of students or faculty. Students should check with their Qualifying Exam Committee advisor(s) about continuing the role into the dissertation phase. Students who have any questions or concerns about the process should consult the Director of Graduate Studies or Chair.

### **Dissertation Proposal Defense**

After successfully completing the Qualifying Examination, the student produces a Dissertation Proposal in the sixth semester. This should be done in close consultation with the dissertation advisor, and perhaps other members of the committee.

The Proposal itself should be no longer than 25 pages (8,000 words), not including a one- or two-page bibliography. Proposals should exhibit a clear and original idea that has some chance of being defended, a relatively clear path to working out the thesis, some discussion of the most relevant secondary literature that contextualizes the thesis, and some awareness of where the main difficulties lie. A sketch of the chapter structure should be provided, but a detailed précis of individual chapters is not required.

After the thesis proposal has been circulated to the faculty (at least a week in advance) the student defends the proposal orally. Since the primary purpose of the defense is to engage with faculty members on the substantive points of the proposal, the defense is not public.

In evaluating whether to approve a student for doctoral candidacy, the department includes consideration of the student's overall record in courses, their departmental service and any professional activities, as well as the oral proposal defense.

Typically, the department approves the proposal with some constructive suggestions for changes. If the proposal is judged not to be promising the student receives a grade of "Fail." If it is consistent with the University time limit of eight semesters to achieve Candidacy, the student may later either defend a revised version of the first proposal or defend a different proposal.

Once the proposal has been approved, the student should immediately contact the Graduate Program Administrator and submit the appropriate paperwork to the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies in order to advance to Candidacy. See the next section for further details.

As noted above, the department expects students to defend their proposals successfully by the end of the sixth semester. However, students who have had to retake their qualifying exams, or whose first proposal defense was unsuccessful, may defend in the seventh semester. Failure to defend a proposal successfully by the end of the seventh semester will result in dismissal from the program.

### **Special Requirements**

There is no general language requirement, but a student whose chosen dissertation work requires competence in one or more foreign languages is required to demonstrate such competence before being approved for Candidacy. Such competence is usually demonstrated by means of a one-hour exam, translating from the language(s) into English. A student needing substantial work to fulfill this requirement may be granted extra time (up to an extra year) in the normal course of study; that is, "Satisfactory Progress" toward attaining candidacy for such a student may mean a longer gap than usual between coursework and being Advanced to Candidacy. Note that the University requires Candidacy to be achieved by the end of the eighth semester.



Similarly, students working in certain fields, such as the philosophy of science may, depending on the specific nature of their dissertation project, be required to show competence in a field outside of philosophy (e.g., some field of mathematics or biology). This competence may be acquired by extra coursework or in some other way; and if appropriate, the timetable will be adjusted accordingly. Note again that the University requires students to achieve Candidacy by the end of the eighth semester.

## Candidacy

The designation “Advanced to Candidacy” (colloquially called “ABD” for “all but dissertation”) is important for four reasons. First, the University time limit for achieving it is eight semesters. Second, such a designation automatically qualifies a student for a Masters of Arts degree (see the Graduate Program Administrator for submitting the appropriate paperwork). Third, various organizations and foundations, on and off campus, offer additional monies for a variety of purposes for students who are Advanced to Candidacy. Fourth, some local colleges offer part-time teaching positions only to students with an M.A.

For all these reasons, an official definition is important: Students are Advanced to Candidacy only if they have met the following requirements:

- fulfilled the logic requirement,
- passed 14 approved courses,
- achieved a cumulative GPA of at least 3.7,
- passed the Qualifying Exam,
- fulfilled any relevant special requirements (e.g., language,),
- successfully passed an oral defense of a dissertation proposal,
- and
- filed a signed Petition for Candidacy with the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (GPS).

In approving the student for Candidacy, the department evaluates the overall record in courses, departmental service and professional activities, as well as the oral proposal defense.

The Petition for Candidacy requires the formation of a Dissertation Committee and the approval of the Chair or DGS, Graduate Program Administrator, and Dean of GPS.

The University requires that the Dissertation Committee include at least two tenured or tenure track members of the department and must also include at least one qualified Rice faculty member who is not a member of the department. The Petition for Candidacy for a Doctoral Degree form requires the name of the outside faculty member, so it is helpful to give thought to an appropriate person. The committee and other faculty are good sources for suggestions.

Faculty at other institutions may be included but are in addition to the three required Rice faculty. More information on the makeup of committee members can be found in the General Announcements: <https://ga.rice.edu/graduate-students/academic-policies-procedures/regulations-procedures-doctoral-degrees/#text> . Samples of the Master's Candidacy Degree and Petition for Candidacy for a Doctoral Degree forms can be found in Section XIII.

## Dissertation Completion

Two or three years is the most desirable timetable for finishing the dissertation. Students are very strongly advised to have a solid draft of the whole thesis by August 1st of the year in which they intend to go on the job market. It improves chances significantly when applying for jobs if the advisor can report to potential employers that the thesis will be finished within the year; also, in the job-interview situation, with a draft in hand it is much easier to say precisely what the thesis accomplishes.

Students who have achieved Candidacy register for PHIL 800, Research and Thesis, with their Dissertation Advisor and are evaluated each semester as to whether they are making Satisfactory Progress toward completing the dissertation. Students who are not making Satisfactory Progress receive a grade of Unsatisfactory ("U") in PHIL 800. A grade of "U" in PHIL 800 places the student on probation; two grades of "U" - whether or not they are successive - can be grounds for dismissal from the program.

Section VI contains *one set* of expectations for the semesters after PhD candidacy in the Philosophy Department, though not every successful student will meet precisely this set of expectations. The student should be sure to arrive at a clear set of expectations from their advisor(s). It is the responsibility of the student to have adequate information and materials in the hands of his or her advisor(s) by the official end of the semester for the evaluation of progress in PHIL 800. No grades of Incomplete ("INC") will be given for PHIL 800 except for medical reasons. The question of "Unsatisfactory Progress" is addressed further in Sections VI and VII.

It may happen that a student or the student's advisor does not feel that the two have a productive working relationship. In a situation of this sort, a change in the student's advisor is possible at the initiative of either the advisor or the student after consultation with the department chair. For more information, see Section V on Choosing an Advisor.

The normal department deadline for defending the dissertation is three years after having Advanced to Candidacy. Rice University time boundaries for all PhD students is eight years after initial enrollment.

After completing the dissertation, the student gives copies of it to the Dissertation Committee well in advance of the hoped-for defense date. If each reader deems a defense appropriate, the student schedules a public oral defense. Note that the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (GPS) requires that dissertation

defenses be publicized through them *at least two weeks prior to the defense*. It is important for students to contact the Graduate Program Administrator to go over details and requirements for their oral defense and thesis submission.

The Dissertation Committee administers the oral examination for the student's dissertation defense and has final evaluative authority over the oral defense and the written thesis.

### **Self-Reports**

Students are required to submit a report to the Director of Graduate Studies on their academic and professional accomplishments and plans each semester by the Friday after the end of examination period. At the end of the fall semester, first year students report primarily on their course work and plans for the second semester. Others should report what they have accomplished academically and professionally during the summer and fall, how it compares with the expectations set the previous May, and what they expect to accomplish during the spring semester.

At the end of the spring semester, students report what has been accomplished that term, how it matches up with the expectations set in December, and what they hope and expect to accomplish during the coming summer and the fall semester. In each case, the report should include both progress through the different phases of the graduate program (courses, qualifying exam, proposal, dissertation, TA and RA assignments) and professional activities (talks and presentations, publications and submitted papers), as well as any other relevant information such as courses taught at Rice or elsewhere.

### **Presentations**

Giving presentations of philosophical material is an essential ingredient in being a philosopher. Consequently, we expect all students to give at least one presentation appropriate to their level in the program each year. Specifically, students in years one and two should either give a seminar presentation, a talk presenting a work in progress, or present at a graduate student or professional conference. Third year students should defend a dissertation proposal. Students in the fourth and subsequent years should give a talk presenting a work in progress, or present at a graduate student or professional conference. Presenting comments at a conference suffices, but chairing a session does not.

## **V. Choosing an Advisor**

During the coursework phase of the program, students should begin to develop a sense of what areas or specific questions they find most intriguing and for which they have an aptitude, and should consider who among the faculty would be a good fit for a dissertation advisor.

Immediately after finishing courses in the fourth semester, students need to designate

an advisor for the Qualifying Examination (see Section IV). This process is initiated by the student, directly with faculty and with consultation from the DGS and should begin well before the deadline. Typically, but not necessarily, the advisor for the Qualifying Examination is also the faculty member who becomes the dissertation advisor.

Immediately upon passing the Qualifying Examination, students must submit the Evaluation of Qualifying Examination and Declaration of Dissertation Advisor form (see forms in Section XIII). Again, this process is initiated by the student in conversation with faculty with whom the student is interested in working, and with guidance from the DGS. Students should work closely with their advisor in developing the dissertation proposal.

As the project progresses, it may turn out that a different faculty member is a better fit, either pedagogically or philosophically or it may happen that a student or the student's advisor does not feel that the two have a productive working relationship. After consulting with the advisor, DGS, and department chair, a new form declaring a different dissertation advisor can be submitted.

## **VI. Evaluation and "Satisfactory Progress"**

The department is responsible for keeping students informed regarding their progress in the program. Students should consult with the DGS, their advisor, or other faculty if there is any uncertainty about their status or the department's expectations.

During the first two years of the program, evaluation is primarily grading and comments on coursework. Students are encouraged to communicate with faculty for additional feedback, and for advice and guidance throughout the semester. Students who are beyond coursework should be in regular contact with their advisors for guidance and feedback. Faculty members differ widely in advising style, and students should clarify expectations with all of their committee members early in the process. Regarding professional progress and job market preparedness, students should also consult with the Placement Director.

The department faculty meets in early January and late May to review graduate student progress in the previous semester. At that time, the faculty review student self-reports (see section IV), coursework, and other relevant material, such as the Qualifying Examination, language exam, and performance of departmental duties – and decide upon an overall evaluation of progress. That evaluation is communicated to each student by the Director of Graduate Studies in writing.

It is in these meetings that the department takes official action, such as placing students on probationary status (e.g., if they have failed a course, if their GPA is unsatisfactory, or if their cumulative performance is not satisfactory). If a student is already on probation or has been in the past, and the department judges that there has been insufficient improvement, it may be recommended that the student pursue completing the program requirements for the Non-Thesis or Thesis Master's degree instead of completing the PhD program.

The desirable flexibility of a small program can sometimes leave students unclear on expectations. Therefore, we provide a list of sufficient conditions for "Satisfactory Progress." While these conditions are not, strictly speaking, necessary for Satisfactory Progress, failure to meet any of these conditions by the specified deadlines may be grounds for "Unsatisfactory Progress" and therefore for probationary status, or, if recurring, dismissal from the program.

The following are sufficient conditions for "Satisfactory Progress" for each stage of the program:

Semester 1. Pass all courses, complete 3 or 4 courses with an overall 3.5 GPA, satisfy the logic requirement, complete self-report.

Semester 2. Pass all courses, have completed 7 courses with 3.6 GPA, complete self-report.

Semester 3. Pass all courses, have completed 10 or 11 courses with an overall 3.65 GPA, satisfactory performance of departmental duties, complete self-report.

Semester 4. Pass all courses, have completed 14 courses with 3.7 GPA, satisfactory performance of department duties, complete self-report. Choose a Qualifying Examination committee, develop a Qualifying Examination reading list, and submit the Qualifying Examination Declaration form by June 1<sup>st</sup> after the fourth semester (see forms in Section XIII).

Semester 5. Pass Qualifying Examination, declare Primary Advisor (see forms in Section XIII), satisfactory performance of departmental duties, complete self-report.

Semester 6. Defend thesis proposal, apply for candidacy (see forms in Section XIII), satisfactory performance of departmental duties, complete self-report.

Semester 7. Complete 25 pages of good quality thesis draft, satisfactory performance of departmental duties, complete self-report.

Semester 8. Complete 50 pages of good quality thesis draft, satisfactory performance of departmental duties, complete self-report.

Semester 7 or 8. Give a talk such as a conference presentation.

Semester 9. Complete 80 pages of good quality thesis draft, satisfactory performance of departmental duties, complete self-report.

Semester 10. Complete 110 pages of good quality thesis draft, satisfactory performance of departmental duties, complete self-report.

Semester 9 or 10. Give a talk such as a conference presentation.

Semester 11. Complete 140 pages of good quality thesis draft, complete self-report.

Semester 12. Complete 170 pages of good quality thesis draft, complete self-report.

For any semester after qualifying for candidacy passing an oral defense of the completed dissertation is among sufficient conditions for satisfactory progress.

## **VII. Satisfactory Progress, Academic Probation, and Dismissal**

The department reviews all graduate students at the end of each semester. Students who meet the criteria for Satisfactory Progress will be informed in writing that they are in good standing. In the cases of a student who does not meet the criteria, the department will consider whether the student will be regarded as making Satisfactory Progress nonetheless because of mitigating circumstances. The department decision will be communicated in writing and will include any special expectations or requirements.

Students who are not making Satisfactory Progress will be informed in writing that they are on academic probation and the department will specify what must be accomplished in the following semester for the student to be regarded as making Satisfactory Progress and returned to good standing. Students who do not meet the specified expectations may be terminated from the program after that following semester.

In extreme cases – excessive absences, failure to complete assignments, or failure to complete departmental service requirements – students may be terminated immediately by a vote of the department.

See the General Announcements for further details: <https://ga.rice.edu/graduate-students/academic-policies-procedures/regulations-procedures-all-degrees/>.

## VIII. Master's Degrees

Our program only admits students intending to complete a doctoral degree, but there are three ways to qualify for a Master of Arts in Philosophy degree while in the PhD program at Rice: (1) a Non-thesis Master's, (2) being officially Advanced to Candidacy (Candidacy Master's), and (3) a Thesis Master's.

### (1) Candidacy Master's Degrees:

The Candidacy Master's degree is received "along the way" to earning a PhD in Philosophy. Students who are "Advanced to Candidacy" will have the opportunity to fill out a Candidacy Master's Degree form (see sample in Section XIII) for degree conferral.

In cases where a student has not, in the judgment of the department, made satisfactory progress toward the PhD, the department may either recommend or require that a student work toward a Master's Degree, either by means of the Thesis Master's or by the Non-thesis Master's – sometimes as a probationary requirement, other times as a definitive end-stage of enrollment in the program. Such a suggestion is made only after the student has already been placed on probation one or more times for failure to maintain satisfactory progress.

### (2) Non-Thesis Master's Degrees:

For a Non-thesis M.A., the candidate must satisfy the following requirements:

- Complete at least two semesters in residence at Rice University.
- Complete 42 hours of courses (14 courses) approved for graduate credit in philosophy at Rice University with B- or better.
- Accumulate an overall GPA of at least 3.0.
- Complete at least 30 hours in philosophy at the 500 level.
- Satisfy the departmental logic requirement (PHIL 505 or examination).
- Complete at least 5 courses in an area of concentration.
- Satisfactorily complete departmental duties.
- File a petition for M.A. Candidacy Approval by the appropriate deadline. (See the Academic Calendar and Graduate Program Administrator for assistance.)

### (3) Thesis Master's Degrees:

A Thesis Master's has the same requirements as a Non-thesis Master's except rather than requiring 14 courses, it requires the completion of nine regular department courses plus one thesis research course, and the writing and oral defense of a Master's Thesis. The student is not required to present a formal oral defense of the proposal for such a thesis; it is enough to have an advisor and topic approved by the department. Second and third (departmental) readers are then selected by the department, usually upon recommendation by the student and the advisor. The student is required to give a public oral defense of the Master's thesis before it is officially accepted by the department. The final judgment as to acceptance or

rejection belongs to the department as a whole. After the oral defense, the department members in attendance meet and decide whether to accept it or not.

Rice University requires that defenses be publicized through them *at least two weeks prior to the defense*. Completion of the thesis is expected to take between one semester and one year. See the Graduate Program Administrator for assistance.

## **IX Other Funding:**

In addition to the five years of funding normally provided by the department, other sources are available both during and after the five years. For example, the department nominates an advanced student each year for a competitive Lodieska Stockbridge Vaughn Fellowship administered by the University. Some advanced students are successful in winning funding from national organizations such as the Woodrow Wilson Foundation. Many are successful in competing for the various funds provided by the Humanities Research Center (<http://hrc.rice.edu/calls-deadlines>).

### **Special Graduate Fellowships for Continuing Students**

Each spring, department chairs are invited to nominate continuing graduate students for the following special endowed fellowships; the final recipients are chosen by the Graduate Council. The amount of the fellowship and the number of recipients vary from year to year.

- **Lodieska Stockbridge Vaughn:** To provide a fellowship for a graduate student whose record at Rice shows evidence of outstanding achievement and promise. Four or five awards are usually given.
- **James T. Wagoner Fellow - Foreign Study Scholarships:** Applicant is expected to enroll in a foreign university or conduct research in a foreign country. Funding ranges from \$3,500-15,000 and is related to the scholar's projected expenses for a year, semester, or summer.

An exhaustive list of fellowships and grants administered by Rice, as well as outside organizations, can be found on the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (GPS) website: <https://graduate.rice.edu/fellowship-opps>

Additional opportunities are announced on the PHIL-GRAD, the department's ListServ. Students are encouraged to read their email regularly and seek opportunities on their own. If you have any questions, ask the DGS, Chair or any other faculty member.

## **X. Beyond the Degree**

Graduate study is very different from earlier stages of schooling. At issue is not merely completing a set of requirements so that one can move on to the next academic hurdle. There are two general differences to emphasize: professional acculturation and market readiness.



Students who intend to pursue an academic career should understand that there are many considerations involved in finding a job beyond completion of the dissertation. Prospective employers are concerned about teaching ability and often expect existing publications as an indication of future scholarly productivity. The department provides many opportunities for students to improve their job prospects such as workshops on publishing and the job market. The department also provides mock interview opportunities and other advice and support during the job application process.

Students are expected to attend departmental colloquia, dissertation defenses and other departmental events. Philosophical activities are not limited to the classroom and the journals; prospective employers expect the kind of professionalization that can only be accomplished by long-term participation in a variety of philosophical activities.

## Teaching

The Department of Philosophy typically hires one or two graduate students each semester to teach courses in the department during the school year and during the summer. A request for student proposals is sent out each spring for the following academic year. Department funding is highly contingent upon a variety of factors and varies from year to year. Preference is normally given to students who have successfully completed courses or a certificate from the Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE) (<http://cte.rice.edu/>).

## Teaching and Pedagogy Support:

The Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE) at Rice offers a variety of [courses and workshops](#) to help students develop as teachers and prepare for the job market, including the opportunity to earn a [Certificate in Teaching and Learning](#).

CTE courses can be taken as stand-alone courses. It is highly recommended that students take at least UNIV 500, a 3-credit course focused on topics such as course and syllabus design, student engagement, and classroom management. More information about the CTE can be found at: <http://cte.rice.edu/>.

## Teaching Opportunities:

Avenues for teaching experience beyond the Department of Philosophy at Rice for graduate students include:

The **Center for Academic and Professional Communication – CAPC** <https://pwc.rice.edu/center-academic-and-professional-communication> hires student consultants enthusiastic about working with Rice students to improve communication skills. The annual job notice is posted in late March and training is provided to successful applicants. Students are strongly encouraged to consider applying for these positions in order to provide a strong foundation for FWIS teaching opportunities in the future.

The **Program in Writing and Communication - PWC** <http://pwc.rice.edu>, hires a number of graduate students each semester for [consultant, teaching assistant, and instructor positions](#) for the University's First-Year Writing Intensive Seminars (FWIS).

The **Humanities Research Center (HRC)** offers funding for developing and teaching a Public Humanities course at Rice. Eligible students will be in their fifth, sixth, or seventh years and have completed departmental pedagogy requirements. More information can be found at: <http://hrc.rice.edu/calls-deadlines>.

Outside of Rice, many students have been successful in securing teaching positions at various branches of the University of Houston, community colleges and other institutions.

### **Graduate Student Roles**

Prospective employers may consider whether applicants contributed to the academic community in other ways. There are four official roles for graduate students to participate in the department and University:

**Graduate Representatives to the Faculty:** Each year, the philosophy graduate students elect two departmental representatives—one in their first three years of the program and one in their fourth year or beyond. These "Grad Reps" coordinate various graduate student activities within the department and serve as a line of communication between graduate students and the faculty. Duties include collecting both informal and quantitative feedback on graduate student opinion about departmental matters (such as feedback on job candidates), working with the department chair and other faculty members on departmental initiatives, addressing graduate student proposals and concerns by initiating discussion and collective action, and leading official graduate student meetings.

**Graduate Representative to the Graduate Student Association:** The GSA Rep is a voting member of the Graduate Student Senate and an external advocate and liaison for the department. They vote on legislative matters including decisions about how to budget and spend GSA taxes levied on all Rice graduate students, and may sit on university-sanctioned committees if s/he chooses. Meetings are held once per month. They also keep the department informed of, and represent the department's opinion on, activities and initiatives conducted by the GSA. There is ample opportunity for professional development. It's a stepping-stone for being a GSA officer, and a pulpit from which to launch meaningful, and funded, policies, initiatives, and activities.

**Graduate Representative to the Humanities Graduate Student Association:** Represents the interests of departmental students to the HGSA and communicates to philosophy students issues and information of relevance to them.

**Ethics Bowl Organizers:** The department, in conjunction with the University and the School of Humanities-organizes, hosts, and staffs the annual Houston High School Ethics Bowl, a regional qualifier for the national Ethics Bowl competition. Teams of students from area high schools compete in an argument-based analysis of ethical case studies that emphasizes dialogue and civility among participants. More information about the competition can be found on the National High School Ethics Bowl's webpage at <https://nhseb.unc.edu/whatisethicsbowl/>.

One or more graduate student organizers from the department help coordinate the Bowl at Rice. This includes working closely with a faculty sponsor and our outside organizer who recruits and works with participating schools, leading training meetings for volunteer judges and moderators (who consist primarily of graduate students from the department), working with the department chair and the Dean's office on issues relating to funding and equipment, publicizing the event by working with representatives of official Rice publications as well as with a design professional to produce fliers and posters for the competition, and coordinating and overseeing the event on competition day.

In addition to these regular roles, faculty often need a student administrator to assist with a conference, facilitate the colloquium series, or assist in other capacities. Depending on the workload and duties required, these roles are occasionally assigned as RA positions.

Students who have any of these roles contribute to the well-being and good functioning of the department and University. Serving in these, and similar roles also provides potentially valuable learning experiences in a broader academic context.

## **XI. Petitions, Appeals and Grievances**

In all cases involving petitions, appeals, and grievances, the University's policies, as set forth in the General Announcements, are the governing authority.

The Department and University prefer to resolve special requests, disagreements, complaints and similar problems at the lowest level possible. If a student feels that there is a problem with their treatment by an instructor, we suggest that the student first consult that instructor. If that attempt does not resolve the issue or if that course of action is not feasible or the student is uncomfortable dealing with the matter in this way, the student may appeal to the Department Chair or, in the event the Department Chair is the faculty member in question, to the Director of Graduate Studies. Students who are not satisfied with the resolution in such cases, or who have grievances against the faculty more generally, have the right to appeal to the Dean of Graduate Studies or the Dean of Humanities as appropriate.

## **Petitions**

Graduate students may petition for exceptions to academic requirements, regulations, and judgments. A course requirement is an example of an academic requirement. Allowed time to degree is an example of an academic regulation. Course grades and dismissals from programs are examples of academic judgments. If a petition is denied, one level of appeal is allowed. For details of the processes, see <https://ga.rice.edu/graduate-students/rights-responsibilities/dispute-resolution/>.

In general, petitions will be handled at the lowest appropriate level. Whenever possible, disagreements should be resolved informally. If that is not possible, a petition regarding requirements, regulations, or judgments of the philosophy graduate program will be handled by the Department. A petition regarding University requirements, regulations, or judgment must be submitted to the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies; the petition must be accompanied by a recommendation from the department.

## **Appeals**

If a petition is denied, a student (or other parties affected by the decision) is allowed one level of appeal. For details see the General Announcements: see <https://ga.rice.edu/graduate-students/rights-responsibilities/dispute-resolution/>.

## **Grievances**

Grievances are different from petitions and appeals. Petitions and appeals involve exceptions to academic requirements, regulations, and judgments. A grievance is a complaint regarding inappropriate conduct by other students, faculty members, or staff. Inappropriate conduct encompasses both inappropriate personal conduct, such as sexual harassment, as well as inappropriate official conduct, such as violation of University policies. Specific policies exist to address grievances based on discrimination or sexual harassment and these policies must be followed in situations involving these issues. For details see: <https://ga.rice.edu/graduate-students/rights-responsibilities/dispute-resolution/>

## **Problem Resolution**

During the course of graduate studies, problems that do not fall under the category of grievances, described above, may arise in the relationship between a graduate student and his/her program or his/her advisor.

Students should attempt to resolve such problems by informing the appropriate faculty members and working together to resolve the problem. When attempts to

resolve the problem informally are unsuccessful, the problem resolution method described in the General Announcements should be followed. The Standing Committee of the department to hear appeals consists of all tenured and tenure track faculty not party to the problem. For more information, see: <https://ga.rice.edu/graduate-students/rights-responsibilities/dispute-resolution/#text>.

## **XII. Title IX Information**

Rice encourages any student who has experienced an incident of sexual, relationship, or other interpersonal violence, harassment or gender discrimination to seek support. There are many options available both on and off campus for all graduate students, regardless of whether the perpetrator was a fellow student, a staff or faculty member, or someone not affiliated with the university.

Students should be aware when seeking support on campus that most employees are required by Title IX to disclose all incidents of non-consensual interpersonal behaviors to Title IX professionals on campus who can act to support that student and meet their needs. The therapists at the Rice Counseling Center and the doctors at Student Health Services are confidential, meaning that Rice will not be informed about the incident if a student discloses to one of these Rice staff members. Rice prioritizes student privacy and safety, and only shares disclosed information on a need-to-know basis.

If you are in need of assistance or simply would like to talk to someone, please call Rice Wellbeing and Counseling Center, which includes Title IX Support: (713) 348-3311.

Policies, including Sexual Misconduct Policy and Student Code of Conduct, and more information regarding Title IX can be found at <https://safe.rice.edu/>.

## **XIII. Forms**

The following forms can be found on pages 22-27:

\*Declaration of Qualifying Examination Committee

\*Evaluation of Qualifying Examination and Declaration of Dissertation Advisor

\*Petition for Approval of Candidacy for a Doctoral Degree (Sample)

\*Candidacy Master's Degree (Sample)



**RICE**

**Department of Philosophy**

**QUALIFYING EXAM DECLARATION**

This form must be completed by June 1<sup>st</sup> after the student's fourth semester and submitted to the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS).

**Student Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Qualifying Examination Committee Chair Name:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Qualifying Examination Committee additional members:**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Area of proposed Examination:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Proposed date of Examination:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Approval of Committee Chair (signature):**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**Received by DGS (initials):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_



**EVALUATION OF QUALIFYING EXAMINATION and  
DECLARATION of DISSERTATION ADVISOR**

This form should be completed immediately after the Exam (required to be taken by the end of the fifth semester), marking the transition from the Qualifying Exam and moving to the Dissertation Prospectus.

**Return completed form to the Graduate Program Administrator.**

**TO BE FILLED OUT BY STUDENT:**

**Student Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Qualifying Examination Committee Chair:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Qualifying Examination Committee additional members:**

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**Area of Examination:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Examination Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**TO BE FILLED OUT BY QUALIFYING EXAMINATION COMMITTEE CHAIR:**

The student has (circle one):      PASSED              FAILED

Committee Report Summary:

Signature of Committee Chair: \_\_\_\_\_

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## **Declaration of Faculty Dissertation Advisor**

**Dissertation Advisor Name:**

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**Signature of Dissertation Advisor**

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**Signature of DGS or Dept. Chair**



**SAMPLE ONLY**

Go to <https://graduate.rice.edu/forms>  
and download most current version.

**PETITION FOR APPROVAL OF CANDIDACY FOR A DOCTORAL DEGREE (C-2)**

Candidacy for the Doctoral degree cannot be approved until the applicant has completed all course requirements, all qualifying or preliminary examinations or department equivalent, and any foreign language requirements.

1. Name of applicant \_\_\_\_\_  
(Last) (First) (M.I.)

2. Department/Graduate program \_\_\_\_\_ Student ID # \_\_\_\_\_

**Attach** to this application a current transcript (printed from WebApps; see your graduate coordinator).

**Attach** to this application a statement of all applicable departmental requirements for both course work and qualifying or preliminary examinations.

**Attach** student's departmental checklist to candidacy to document how the student has fulfilled departmental requirements.

3. Proposed thesis topic (tentative title) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. Thesis Committee, subject to the approval of the GPS. (**type or print**) Please see the General Announcements for rules regarding the composition of thesis committees.

(a) Thesis Director \_\_\_\_\_

Committee Chair within the department (**if different**) \_\_\_\_\_

(b) Member **within** the department \_\_\_\_\_

(c) Member **outside** the department \_\_\_\_\_

Additional member(s) \_\_\_\_\_

\*Thesis committees may later be changed. See <http://graduate.rice.edu/thesis> for additional information.

5. Signatures:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Original signature of Department Chair or  
Director of Graduate Studies

Date \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Graduate Coordinator signature

Date \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dean of Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies

Date \_\_\_\_\_

RETURN TO DEPARTMENT COORDINATOR



**SAMPLE ONLY**  
 Go to <https://graduate.rice.edu/forms>  
 and download most current version.

**CANDIDACY MASTER'S DEGREE (G-1)**

Check one box:

- December conferral - - - - - Deadline: Oct 31  
 May conferral - - - - - Deadline: Feb 28

Deadline to turn in this form:

Check one box:

- Master's of Arts (MA)  
 Master's of Science (MS)

**This degree will be conferred only if the following conditions are satisfied by the Candidate:**

1. Student must be registered for the semester in which the award is to be made.
2. Ph.D. candidacy must have been approved prior to or in conjunction with submission of this petition form.
3. **This form must be returned to the Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies office by October 31 for December conferral or February 28 for May conferral.**

Name of Candidate \_\_\_\_\_  
Last First Middle

Student ID: \_\_\_\_\_ Department Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**Statement of Candidate:**

I wish to accept the Master's Degree. \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Candidate

I have submitted An Application for Degree with the Registrar's Office (available through your ESTHER account) on or before the deadlines listed above.

Signature of Department Chair: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

*Office Use Only*

GPS Approval and Certification \_\_\_\_\_  
(Initial)

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_