

Philosophy, PhD

Doctoral Candidacy

To earn a PhD at Washington University, a student must complete all courses required by their department; maintain satisfactory academic progress; pass certain examinations; fulfill residence and Mentored Experience Requirements; write, defend, and submit a dissertation; and file an Intent to Graduate. For a general layout of doctoral degree general requirements in Arts & Sciences, including an explanation of Satisfactory Academic Progress, students should review the Doctoral Degree Academic Information page of the Arts & Sciences *Bulletin*.

Program Requirements

- **Total Units Required: 54** (Note: Remission applies for a maximum of 72 graduate-level units.)
- Courses must be passed with at least a B-.
- **Degree Length: 6 years**
 - **Note:** Students must be enrolled in 9 graduate credits each semester to retain full-time status. As students complete their course work, if enrolled in fewer than 9 graduate credits, they must enroll in a specific Arts & Sciences graduate course that will show 0 units but does count as full-time status. Students should connect with their department to ensure proper enrollment prior to Add/Drop.
- All students offered admission into the Philosophy PhD program are offered an Arts & Sciences Fellowship, which provides 6 years of funding for students in good academic standing.

Colloquium Attendance

Students are expected to attend departmental colloquium talks. Exceptions may be granted by the Director of Graduate Studies when appropriate (e.g., if a student needs to attend a class that is scheduled at the same time).

Required Courses

All students are required to take the following courses:

- During the first semester, Phil 502 Proseminar in Philosophy.
- Six semesters of Phil 514 Survey Seminar, which surveys a different area of philosophy each semester.
- Four semesters of Phil 516 Research Seminar, which focuses on a specific topic, question, or figure each semester, with an emphasis on philosophical research methods and writing.
- At least one course in formal methods, either Phil 509 Formal Methods for Philosophy or another course approved by the Director of Graduate Studies.

Students in their first three years are expected to maintain full-time status by taking at least 9 units (three courses) of 500-level course work each semester. Thus, all students must take at least 18 500-level courses (54 units) in total (although they may take more) and so must at least five 500-level electives. Elective courses may include courses

in Philosophy or PNP, courses outside of philosophy, independent studies in philosophy, and graduate philosophy courses at Saint Louis University or the University of Missouri–St. Louis, through the Inter-University Exchange Program.

Students are expected to supplement their required courses by auditing or taking additional courses that are relevant to their research.

To fulfill course work requirements, courses must be passed with at least a B-.

Credits cannot be transferred from other institutions.

Code	Title	Units
Phil 502	Proseminar in Philosophy	3
Phil 514	Survey Seminar	18
Phil 516	Research Seminar	12

Qualifying Examinations

Progress toward the PhD is contingent upon the student passing examinations that are variously called *preliminary*, *qualifying*, *general*, *comprehensive*, or *major field exams*. The qualifying process varies according to the program. In some programs, it consists of a series of incremental, sequential, and cumulative exams over a considerable time. In others, the exams are held during a relatively short period of time. Exams may be replaced by one or more papers. The program, which determines the structure and schedule of the required examinations, is responsible for notifying the Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences, of the student's outcome, whether successful or unsuccessful.

In the Philosophy PhD program, each section of Phil 514 Survey Seminar includes a final comprehensive examination taken at the end of the course (but which may be retaken in the event of an unsatisfactory performance). The form of the final comprehensive examination (e.g., written or oral, in-class or take-home) varies and is determined by the instructor. All students must complete six such examinations and obtain a grade of at least a B- on each one; these examination grades are distinct from the course grades for the six semesters of Phil 514 Survey Seminar.

Mentored Experience Requirements

Doctoral students at Washington University must complete a department-defined Mentored Experience. The Mentored Experience Requirement is a doctoral degree milestone that is notated on the student's transcript when complete. Each department has an established Mentored Experience Implementation Plan in which the number of units that a student must earn through Mentored Teaching Experience(s) and/or Mentored Professional Experience(s) is defined. The Mentored Experience Implementation Plans outline how doctoral students within the discipline will be mentored to achieve competencies in teaching at basic and advanced levels. Some departments may elect to include Mentored Professional Experiences as an avenue for completing some units of the Mentored Experience

Requirement. Doctoral students will enroll in LGS 6XXX Mentored Teaching Experience or LGS 7020 Mentored Professional Experience to signify their progression toward completing the overall Mentored Experience Requirement for the degree.

In the Philosophy PhD program, all students are required to complete four Mentored Teaching Experiences, normally in their second and third years.

Dissertation Seminar

Starting in the fourth year all students must satisfactorily complete Phil 8000 Dissertation Seminar, which is devoted to research training and dissertation project development, when the course is offered (normally once a year). (Phil 8000 is a 0-unit course and does not count toward the fulfillment of course work requirements.)

Prospectus

All students must successfully defend a dissertation prospectus before a committee of at least three faculty members, one of whom (the “prospectus advisor”) will supervise the preparation of the prospectus and who will normally go on to serve as the dissertation advisor (see below). Normally, students defend their prospectus before the end of their fourth year of study.

A dissertation prospectus states a problem, a response to the problem, a reckoning of how this response contributes to existing philosophical literature, and an overview of the case for the response. The prospectus should be accompanied by a working bibliography. The structure and length of individual prospectuses varies and is to be determined in consultation and collaboration with the prospectus advisor.

The possible outcomes of a prospectus defense are Pass and Fail. Students may make additional attempts in the event of a failed prospectus defense. The prospectus advisor will inform the Director of Graduate Studies and the Graduate Program Administrator when a student has successfully defended their prospectus.

The Doctoral Dissertation

A Research Advisory Committee (RAC) must be created no later than the end of the student’s third year; departments may set shorter timelines (e.g., by the end of the student’s second year) for this requirement. As evidence of the mastery of a specific field of knowledge and of the capacity for original scholarly work, each candidate must complete a dissertation that is approved by their RAC.

A Title, Scope & Procedure Form for the dissertation must be signed by the committee members and by the program chair. It must be submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences, at least 6 months before the degree is expected to be conferred or before beginning the fifth year of full-time enrollment, whichever is earlier.

A Doctoral Dissertation Guide & Template that give instructions regarding the format of the dissertation are available on the website of the Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences. Both should be read carefully at every stage of dissertation preparation.

The Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences, requires each student to make the full text of the dissertation available to the committee members for their review at least 1 week before the defense. Most degree programs require 2 or more weeks for the review period; students should check with their faculty.

In the Philosophy PhD program, students prepare a dissertation under the supervision of a faculty member (the “dissertation advisor”). A dissertation is a substantial piece of original philosophical research. The structure and length of individual dissertations varies and is to be determined in consultation and collaboration with the dissertation advisor.

The Dissertation Defense

Approval of the written dissertation by the RAC is necessary before the student can orally defend their dissertation. The Dissertation Defense Committee that observes and examines the student’s defense consists of at least five members, who normally meet these criteria:

- Three of the five must be full-time Washington University faculty members or, for programs offered by Washington University-affiliated partners, full-time members of a Washington University-affiliated partner institution who are authorized to supervise PhD students and who have appropriate expertise in the proposed field of study; one of these three must be the PhD student’s primary thesis advisor, and one may be a member of the emeritus faculty. A fourth member may come from inside or outside the student’s program. The fifth member must be from outside the student’s program; this fifth member may be a Washington University research professor or lecturer, a professor from another university, or a scholar from the private sector or government who holds a doctorate and maintains an active research program.
- Three of the five normally come from the student’s degree program; at least one of the five must not.

All committees must be approved by the Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences, regardless of whether they meet the normal criteria.

The committee is appointed by the Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences, upon the request of the degree program. The student is responsible for making the full text of the dissertation accessible to their committee members for their review in advance of the defense. Faculty and graduate students who are interested in the subject of the dissertation are normally welcome to attend all or part of the defense but may ask questions only at the discretion of the committee members. Although there is some variation among degree programs, the defense ordinarily focuses on the dissertation itself and its relation to the student’s field of expertise.

In the Philosophy PhD program, the possible outcomes of a dissertation defense are Pass, Revisions, and Fail. When revisions are required, the dissertation advisor will provide, in writing, a description of what revisions are required and a deadline for revisions that is no more than three months after the dissertation defense. When the dissertation is resubmitted, the dissertation advisor will determine if the revisions are satisfactory.

Submission of the Dissertation

After the defense, the student must submit an electronic copy of the dissertation online to the Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences. The submission website requires students to choose among publishing and copyrighting services offered by ProQuest's ETD Administrator. The degree program is responsible for delivering the final approval form, signed by the committee members at the defense and then by the program chair or director, to the Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences. Students who defend their dissertations successfully have not yet completed their PhD requirements; they finish earning their degree only when their dissertation submission has been accepted by the Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences.

Master's Degree Along the Way

In the Philosophy PhD program, students can receive a Master of Arts once they have completed their required course work and fulfilled the qualifying examinations requirement.

Phone: 314-935-6670
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