Graduate Student Handbook



University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa
Department of Philosophy

Rev. 6/02/26

Table of Contents

PH.D. PROGRAM 1
Ph.D. Graduation Requirements 1
Course Requirements 2
Examinations 3
Writing Requirement 4
Dissertation 5
M.A. PROGRAM 7
M.A. Graduation Requirements 7
Course Requirements 7
Writing Requirement 8
RESOURCES 9
Graduate Division 9
Graduate Student Organization (GSO) 10
Financial Support 10
Student Employment (SECE) 10
Student Basic Needs 10
Student Success Resources 10
University Health Services 11
Counseling and Student Development Center 11
Title IX 11

PH.D. PROGRAM

Ph.D. Graduation Requirements

Below is a rough timeline of when an incoming Ph.D. student should satisfy their graduation requirements.

Year 1 & 2 (Semesters 1-4)
Coursework:

- 10 courses (30 credits)
- Distribution Requirements (PHIL 445 Logic; PESTAE; MELPAS; 3 HIST; 2 CI)

Year 3: (End of semester 5 or semester 6)
:

- Area Selection: Aesthetics, Metaphysics, Epistemology, Political Philosophy, Ethics, etc.
- Study of Texts
- Written and Oral Examination

Year 3 / Year 4 (End of semester 6 or beginning of semester 7)
Language Exam and Dissertation Proposal Defense:

- Language Exam: (typically) classical Greek, Latin, French, German, Arabic, classical Chinese, Japanese, Sanskrit, or Pali.
- Dissertation Committee Selection
- Prospectus Writing
- Prospectus Defense
- Formal Writing Requirement (before, as a part of, or immediately after Prospectus Defense)

The Language Examination **must** be taken before the prospectus can be defended.

Year 4 and beyond (Semester 7-14)
ABD:

- Dissertation Writing
- ABD Students can teach courses above the 100- level
- Register for PHIL 800 Dissertation Research

As per university policy, a student must complete their Ph.D. studies by the end of their 7th year at the University.

Course Requirements

I. Credit Requirements

To be eligible for conferral of the Doctor of Philosophy degree, a student:

- ***must*** maintain a grade point average of no less than B+ (cumulative 3.3).
- ***must*** take at least 30 hours of coursework (beyond the M.A. if the M.A. was earned at UH), which may be Western, non-Western, or comparative in nature.
- ***may*** count up to 12 credit hours at the upper-division undergraduate (400-) level towards their required 30 hours of coursework.
- ***cannot*** take any third-year (300- level) courses in philosophy in fulfillment of their doctoral coursework requirements.
- ***cannot*** take the undergraduate Philosophy majors' capstone course, PHIL 449.

Directed Research (PHIL 699) can be taken for (a) independent research; (b) remedial work; and (c) supplementary work. However:

- No more than 12 hours of PHIL 699 may be counted as credit for the Ph.D.
- Students must meet with their instructor at least three times during the semester
- Students must either take an examination (oral or written) or write a paper on the material covered.

II. Proseminar

All incoming Ph.D. students ***must*** take the proseminar course during their first semester. Incumbent Ph.D. Students ***cannot*** take the proseminar course a second time.

III. Distribution Requirements

Among the 10 courses which Ph.D. students complete in satisfaction of their coursework requirements, they must take:

- at least one (1) course in the following areas of study: Metaphysics, Epistemology, Logic, or Philosophy of Science (or MELPOS);
- at least one (1) course in the following areas of study: Political Philosophy, Ethics or Social Theory, or Aesthetics (or PESTAE);
- PHIL 445 to satisfy their Logic requirement (unless they have already taken this course during the course of their M.A. at UH);
- two (2) contemporary issues courses. (For a course to count as satisfying the contemporary issues distribution requirement, the course must involve reading of a restricted number of key texts by one to three [related] authors writing after 1940.); and
- at least three (3) text-intensive courses in the History of Western Philosophy. (For a course to count as satisfying the history distribution requirement, the course must involve reading of a restricted number of key texts by one to three [related] authors writing prior to 1940.)

Examinations

I. Language Examination

Students shall demonstrate proficiency in at least one (and, where deemed necessary, two) philosophically significant foreign language(s). Typically, these are: classical Greek, Latin, French, German, Arabic, classical Chinese, Japanese, Sanskrit, or Pali.

Students must pass a language proficiency exam in a philosophically significant language.

If specialist mastery relating to the subject of the student's dissertation research is required, certification will be conducted by the student's dissertation committee.

II. Canonical Area Examination (Area Examination)

Students shall pass a Canonical Area Examination ('Area Examination'). The purpose of the Canonical Area exam is to have a student demonstrate a reasonable degree of competence in a major area of philosophy.

When wishing to set up an Area Examination, the candidate should notify the Department Examination Coordinator at least six weeks before he or she wishes the exam to be scheduled. The members of the student's (canonical) examining committee are to be selected by the Examination Coordinator in consultation with the student.

Exam Administration: The test is administered by a three-person examination committee in consultation with the student in an area related to the subject matter of his or her prospective dissertation. There should be three examiners, and these should represent the faculty members most conversant with the area in question.

The convener of the student's examining committee (who will ordinarily become the chair of the student's dissertation committee) will be responsible for administering the exam.

Selection of Texts: The candidate, in consultation with the Coordinator, will agree on an examining committee and a list of texts.

The Area Examination exam can be taken in any one of the following areas: political theory, ethics, metaphysics, epistemology, aesthetics, and philosophy of language.

Once the student has selected an area for examination, the Examination Coordinator will provide the student with the standard list of texts for the Area Exam in the relevant area. The list of core readings should consist of not more than eight (8) texts.

Five (5) of these are to be Western classics, which are to be augmented by:

- two or three non-Western texts for those engaged in Asian or comparative philosophy,
- two or three more Western texts for those specializing in Western philosophy.

The candidate may, after seeking the Examination Coordinator's approval, elect to drop one of these in favor of a comparably demanding text of their choice.

The three additional texts (whether Western or non-Western) are to be selected to suit the specific interests of the candidate.

Exam Format: The Area Exam (Canonical Exam) is a three-day take-home exam followed by an oral component.

The convener will solicit questions for the exam from the various members of the examining committee, and will submit these for vetting to the Coordinator. Once the questions are approved, the student may undertake the written portion of the exam.

The candidate will be given a list of 12 questions and allowed 72 hours in which to select and answer three questions.

The expectation would be that each answer should ***not*** exceed five (5) pages.

This written exam will be followed by an oral exam, during which students will be further interrogated, not only with regard to the questions that they wrote on, but also on those questions that they chose not to address. This exam will not be public. A candidate will be allowed to retake the exam once. (A student who fails an area exam for a second time will not be allowed to continue in the doctoral program.)

It should be understood by students preparing to write their area exam that faculty members will assume that students have acquired, in addition, at least some familiarity with the relevant secondary literature.

Writing Requirement

I. Formal Writing Requirement

In addition to a prospectus defense, to be eligible to progress to the writing of their dissertation students are required to produce a thoroughly researched scholarly paper. The purpose of this requirement is to transition from writing term papers for courses to writing dissertations and to make progress toward their dissertation after coursework.

For this, students will be required to:

- Substantially revise a term paper that bears in some way on the topic of the dissertation

OR

- Write a research paper (not for a course) that bears in some way on the topic of the dissertation. This paper could overlap with studying for the Area Exam; students could engage more with certain texts, scholarly debate, or substantive philosophical issues. It could also be a prospective or 'proto'-chapter of the dissertation, an early version of a possible dissertation chapter.

This piece of writing can be submitted to the dissertation committee (to be determined in consultation with the chair of the student's dissertation committee):

- Before the prospectus defense;
- As a component of the prospectus defense, alongside the prospectus; or
- After the prospectus defense, so as to incorporate feedback from the defense.

II. Prospectus Defense

Formal approval of a dissertation topic follows upon completion of the language and area examinations. The student should secure the committee's approval as soon as possible, and in any case within six months after passing the area examination.

The Approval of Dissertation Topic Form IV must be submitted before a student may register for PHIL 800 Dissertation Research.

A detailed dissertation prospectus must be submitted to the committee members and a special conference called to discuss the proposal. If the committee does not approve the proposal, the conference must be repeated.

Dissertation

I. Committee Selection

When a student is ready to form a dissertation committee, the student should first consult the Graduate Chair concerning appropriate faculty members to ask to serve on the committee, given the topic the student has in mind.

Only full members of the graduate faculty can serve as the chair of a dissertation committee, but aside from this restriction, the student has complete discretion over which of the Department's faculty members to choose as their committee's chair (providing, of course, that the professor in question agrees to serve in this capacity).

The student and the dissertation committee chair together will draw up a list of the other committee members. This list will then be provided to the Graduate Chair along with a two- or three- sentence description of the dissertation topic.

At the subsequent Department meeting, the Graduate Chair will announce the proposed membership of the new committee and will read out the description of the dissertation topic. If there are no objections raised, the committee membership will be treated as officially approved.

If there are any objections raised, the designated chair of the new committee will be asked to explain why the proposed membership is appropriate. If the objections raised are sufficiently serious to require a reconsideration of the committee's composition, the Graduate Chair and the designated committee chair will meet together with the student to consider ways to address the expressed concerns of the Department.

When the Graduate Chair has been satisfied that appropriate changes have been made, the dissertation committee membership will be taken as officially approved. Two principles will be observed whenever it is possible to do so: (1) no faculty member shall be imposed upon a dissertation committee against the student's expressed wish; and (2) no committee will be deemed satisfactory without pertinent faculty expertise in the subject matter of the dissertation.

The committee may also select, at its discretion, an outside reader for the dissertation, an authority in the field not connected with the University of Hawai'i. The reader's opinion will be advisory, but the committee may require a revision of the dissertation upon that advice. The committee chair will forward the written evaluation of the outside reader to the Graduate Chair for inclusion in the student's permanent file.

II. Dissertation Writing and Drafts

A dissertation is expected to be between 50,000 and 75,000 words in length.

Preliminary drafts of the dissertation should be submitted to the committee at least six weeks before any proposed defense date. The committee may require changes or additions at its discretion.

Dissertation Defense: The candidate will proceed to the defense of the dissertation after the committee has given its preliminary approval to a draft. The defense will take the form of an oral examination with all dissertation readers attending. It will render a decision of "pass" or "fail" by majority vote, according to Graduate Division regulations. A member not voting with the majority may request a review following procedures specified in Graduate Division Regulation IV.8.14.4.c. All such defenses are open to the public.

Dissertation Records: After the candidate has defended the dissertation, the committee chair will report the result of the defense to the Graduate Chair, who will forward the proper forms, duly signed by all committee members, to Graduate Division for final approval.

Final Draft: A completed draft of the dissertation must be typed according to the specifications established by Graduate Division.

M.A. PROGRAM

M.A. Graduation Requirements

Below is a rough timeline of when an incoming M.A. student should satisfy their graduating requirements.

Year 1 & 2 (Semesters 1-4)
Coursework:

- 10 courses (30 credits)
- Take language course every semester

Strictly speaking, there are no distribution requirements, but it's advisable that students who want to continue on to the Ph.D. program take a range of courses reflecting the distribution requirements for Ph.D. students.

Course Requirements

To be eligible for conferral of the Master of Arts degree, a student **must**:

- maintain a grade-point average of no less than B+ (cumulative 3.3);
- complete at least 30 hours of coursework, including:
    - ***no more than*** 12 credit hours at the upper division undergraduate level, counting PHIL 445
        - M.A. students ***can*** take the following courses for credit: 330, 350, 360, 370, 380.
        - M.A. students ***cannot*** take the following courses for credit: 301, 302, 304, 305, 306, 307, 308, 320, 399, 449.*
    - ***at least*** 18 credit hours at the upper-division graduate (600- and 700-) level
- take four semesters (or the demonstrated equivalent) of at least one philosophically significant foreign language, typically: classical Greek, Latin, French, German, Arabic, classical Chinese, Japanese, Sanskrit, or Pali.**

** Any third-year course that is listed here as unavailable to M.A. students may be available if the M.A. student wishing to take it can present to the Graduate Chair a suitable case for its appropriateness.*

*** If a student finishes all philosophy coursework requirements for the M.A. in three semesters– as opposed to the usual four–the student in question will only be required to complete three semesters' worth of language courses.*

Flexible M.A.: Students for whom a more flexible program of study would be more appropriate should work with the graduate chair and a faculty adviser to select a program of coursework around an area of concentration.

Students may count up to three (3) courses (9 credits) from other departments* toward their M.A. in Philosophy, pending approval of the department chair. In pursuit of this more flexible M.A. degree, a student must:

- take ***at least*** 21 credit hours in philosophy courses
- ***At least*** 9 credit hours must be at the graduate level (600- and 700- level).

** If, however, a student opts to write an M.A. thesis, a maximum of two courses (6 credits) from other departments may be counted toward the M.A. in Philosophy.*

Advancing to Ph.D. after M.A. Completion: ***IT IS STRONGLY RECOMMENDED THAT*** M.A. students intending to go on to pursue a Ph.D. in Philosophy at the University of Hawai‘i include among the 10 courses required for the M.A:

- At least **one** course (which can be either a Western-focus or a comparative, but **not** an Asian-focus, course) in the field represented by metaphysics, epistemology, and the philosophy of science (or MELPOS);
- At least **one** course (which can be either a Western-focus or a comparative, but **not** an Asian-focus, course), in the field represented by political, ethical or social theory, and aesthetics (or PESTAE); and
- at least **three** text-intensive, Western-focus courses in the history of philosophy. For a course to satisfy this last designation, it must be dedicated to a close and thorough (that is, complete or almost complete, and with due attention paid to historical context) reading of a restricted number of key texts by one to three (related) authors writing prior to 1940.

Writing Requirement

I. Culminating Exam

Paper Submissions: To complete the M.A., each candidate will submit three seminar papers* to an examining committee in order to demonstrate the scope of the work the student has done toward the M.A.

It is required of the submissions that:

- All three papers were written for philosophy courses
- One paper must be subjected to significant revision, and must be submitted in both revised and unrevised forms as evidence of revision.

** A student who has been admitted into the M.A. program with advanced standing may, at the discretion of the Department's Examination Coordinator, be allowed to submit just two seminar papers–one of which must have been significantly revised –for this purpose.*

Oral Examination: The culminating exam is an oral exam focusing primarily on one of those papers submitted.*

The selection of the focus-paper is strictly at the discretion of the examining committee, but as a matter of practice the student's nomination of the focus-paper is taken into consideration. The exam is expected to last 30-60 minutes and is not public.

** If the examiners so desire, they may raise secondary questions relating to the other papers, as well.*

Passing: In order to receive the M.A. degree, the student must pass this examination. A "pass with distinction" will be required of those seeking admission to the doctoral program. Admission to the doctoral program will continue to be determined in accordance with existing departmental criteria.

Scheduling: This M.A. examination will be scheduled in the last week or two of classes in either the Fall or Spring semester. Papers must be submitted to the examining committee at least three weeks before the exam is to take place. The membership of the examining committee is to be determined by the Department's Examination Coordinator in consultation with the candidate.

II. M.A. Thesis Option

A student in the M.A. program may (conditional upon the availability of an appropriate faculty supervisor), but need not, choose to write an M.A. thesis in their final semester(s). A student may choose to produce an M.A. thesis in either the Fall or the Spring semester of an academic year.

Credit Requirements: Six credits will be granted toward the thirty credits of required coursework for completion of the thesis.

A student is not permitted to begin work on the M.A. thesis until such time as he or she has completed 18 credits of coursework in the M.A. program.

Thesis Defense: Finally, a student who opts to write the M.A. thesis will not be required to take the culminating exam. Instead, there will be a defense of the thesis before a committee of four professors and, in order for a student to be eligible for admission to the doctoral program, he or she must pass this defense "with distinction."

The student is required to deposit a bound copy of his/her thesis in the Moore Reading Room.

RESOURCES

Graduate Division

The Graduate Division has overall responsibilities for all aspects of graduate education at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa. The Graduate Division oversees the following:

- development, implementation and assessment of graduate programs;
- appointment and evaluation of graduate chairs and faculty; and
- admission and guidance of graduate students from matriculation through graduation.

For more information, please go to Graduate Division's website at manoa.hawaii.edu/graduate/.

Graduate Student Organization (GSO)

The UH Mānoa Graduate Student Organization's kuleana is to serve, advocate for, and support graduate students at UH Mānoa; to foster community engagement; to facilitate positive change; and to encourage a Hawaiian place of learning.

The GSO also offers Academic Enrichment Awards to support graduate students travel to events/conferences and Merit Based Awards that recognize graduate students who excel in Diversity, Mentorship, Research, Service and Outreach, Teaching, and Leadership (Empowerment).

For more information, please go to Graduate Division's website: https://manoa.hawaii.edu/gso/.

Financial Support

Various forms of financial support are available to graduate students at UH Mānoa, including Graduate Division Achievement Scholarships, intramural graduate fellowships, extramural funding, and graduate assistantships. For more information, please go to Graduate Division's website: manoa.hawaii.edu/graduate/content/fellowships-scholarships.

Questions of need-based financial aid should be addressed to Financial Aid Services at finaid@hawaii.edu.

Student Employment (SECE)

SECE is the job database available to students at UH Mānoa for on-campus and off-campus job opportunities. Students can go to https://sece.its.hawaii.edu/sece to search for jobs.

Graduate Assistants cannot be employed through SECE. This is considered a multiple appointment and is not allowed.

Student Basic Needs

Basic Needs include food and housing, childcare, mental health, financial resources and transportation, among others. Student basic needs security is critical for ensuring strong academic performance, persistence, graduation, and overall student well-being. If you or someone you know is experiencing basic needs insecurity, please see the following resources: https://www.hawaii.edu/student-basic-needs/resources/manoa/

Student Success Resources

Student Success is dedicated to fostering a campus where students feel a deep sense of belonging, well-being, and engagement. From academic advising and career development to

health, counseling and student life, Student Success provides a full spectrum of support to help students thrive—ensuring they have the tools, resources, and opportunities to succeed both inside and outside the classroom. For more information about the various programs and services within Student Success, visit https://manoa.hawaii.edu/studentsuccess/departments/.

University Health Services

University Health Services Mānoa (UHSM) is staffed by physicians, nurse clinicians, nurses, and other support staff, and offers a wide range of medical services and programs to UH Mānoa students, with many of the services also available to UH Mānoa faculty and staff and students from other UH campuses. Services include general medical care on a walk-in basis; women's health, sports medicine, psychiatry, and dermatology clinics by appointment; pharmacy and clinical laboratory; and student training, employment and volunteer opportunities.

University Health Services Mānoa
1710 East-West Road
(808) 956- 8965
hawaii.edu/shs/

Counseling and Student Development Center

The Counseling and Student Development Center (CSDC) provides a variety of services to students, including short-term personal counseling, couples and career counseling, workshops, support groups, and peer fellow services. All clinical services are confidential. Individual, couples, and group counseling services are free of charge for Mānoa students. In addition, psychiatric services and assessment services are available to students for a fee.

Counseling and Student Development Center
QLCSS Room 312
(808) 956-7927
manoa.hawaii.edu/counseling/

Title IX

The University of Hawai‘i is committed to providing a learning, working and living environment that promotes personal integrity, civility, and mutual respect and is free of all forms of sex discrimination and gender-based violence, including sexual assault, sexual harassment, gender-based harassment, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking. If you or someone you know is experiencing any of these, the University has staff and resources on your campus to support and assist you. Staff can also direct you to resources that are in the community. Here are some:

If you wish to remain **ANONYMOUS**, speak with someone **CONFIDENTIALLY**, or would like to receive information and support in a **CONFIDENTIAL** setting, contact: **(*Confidential Resource)**

Counseling & Student Development Center* (808) 956-7927 • manoa.hawaii.edu/counseling

Respondent Support (808) 956-4392 • PAUrs@hawaii.edu

Student Parents at Manoa (SP@M)* (808) 956-8059 • manoa.hawaii.edu/studentparents/

UH Confidential Advocacy* • advocate@hawaii.edu

University Health Services Manoa* (808) 956-8965 • hawaii.edu/shs/

https://www.manoa.hawaii.edu/titleix/resources.html#confidential

If you wish to **REPORT** an incident of sex discrimination or gender-based violence including sexual assault, sexual harassment, gender-based harassment, domestic violence, dating violence or stalking as well as receive information and support, contact:

Director and Title IX Coordinator
Hawai‘i Hall 124
2500 Campus Road
Honolulu, HI 96822
(808) 956-2299
t9uhm@hawaii.edu

For more information regarding sex discrimination and gender-based violence, the University’s Title IX resources and the University’s Policy, EP 1.204, go to: manoa.hawaii.edu/titleix/.