GONZAGA UNIVERSITY

Guidelines for Students in the Philosophy M.A. Program
revised February 17, 2012

These guidelines are designed to supplement (without in any way substituting for) what is written in our Graduate School Catalogue.

There are three types of requirements for students in the M.A. program in Philosophy: (1) 24 credit hours of graduate-level course; (2) a logic proficiency exam; (3) a comprehensive examination; and (4) a thesis (worth six credit hours). Each M.A. student is expected to complete all degree requirements within a five year period. If the degree requirements have not been completed within the allotted five year period, the M.A. student must petition the program director for reinstatement into the program. Reinstatement will be granted by the program director based on an assessment of the M.A. student’s progress towards completing the degree, and will be left to the discretion of the program director.

Course Work

The M.A. program operates throughout the year, with graduate-level courses being available during the regular academic year (i.e. fall and spring semesters) and during the summer. However, course offerings tend to be quite limited during the summer, so that it is unrealistic to expect to meet all of one’s course requirements during summer sessions only.

Unless prerequisites are specified as conditions for acceptance into the program, M.A. students are free to choose any eight graduate-level courses that are offered, except that they are required to take four Graduate Seminars unless they finish their coursework in three fall and spring semesters or less. They should make their course selections in consultation with their graduate advisor or with the Program Director. Ordinarily these will involve some combination (depending on a student’s interests and philosophical background) of courses in systematic areas of philosophy, such as Epistemology, Business Ethics, or Political Philosophy, and major historical periods, such as Ancient or Medieval Philosophy.

Up to two of the eight graduate-level courses taken may, with the permission of the Program Director and Department Chairperson, be taken either in other accredited graduate schools’ Philosophy programs or at Gonzaga University on an Individualized Study basis.

All M.A. students are expected to maintain a minimum 3.0 cumulative grade point average. In addition, M.A. students will be allowed a maximum of one semester grade of B- or lower per semester, and it is expected that no M.A. student will receive a semester
grade of B- or lower in consecutive semesters. Failure to meet any of these grade requirements or expectations will result in the M.A. student being placed on academic probation for one semester. During the probationary semester the M.A. student is expected to reach the minimum standard for acceptable coursework for each course taken, which is a semester grade of B or better. At the end of the probationary semester, the M.A. student’s status will be reviewed by the program director and grad committee, who will then decide whether to remove the probation, to continue the probation, or to terminate the student’s participation in the program.

Student progress will be monitored throughout the program, with a review by the Graduate Advisory Committee after the student completes 12 credits. If at any time a student manifests problems making progress toward completing the program, appropriate steps, including advising and formal probation, may be taken. In cases where it is the judgment of the Graduate Director and the Graduate Advisory Committee that the student is unlikely to successfully complete the program, the student may be expelled. Since an essential function of the program is to assist students in becoming professional members of the discipline, a student’s status in the program will be evaluated not only on the basis of academic performance but also on such factors, where the student participates in them, as assistantship work, the graduate conference, and other areas where professionalism can be demonstrated.

**Comprehensive Examination**

The comprehensive exam is normally offered twice a year: at the end of Spring semester in April, and at the beginning of the Fall semester in September, with schedule exceptions allowed for demonstrated student need. Students are allowed three attempts to pass the Exam. Any attempt, whether complete or not, counts as one of the three attempts.

The examination consists of two parts, an essay-format written component and a one-hour oral component. The written portion covers great works in the History of Philosophy. A reading list and set of sample topics/questions (subject to yearly review and revision by the philosophy department) is available for students (typically the reading and question lists will be given to students at the beginning of their first semester of course work). Although our courses can normally help students prepare for parts of the comprehensive examination, students should not expect any of our courses to be tailored to this purpose, and should expect to have to prepare some parts of the material on their own no matter which courses they have taken. Each student must write eight essays, two on each of the major periods of the History of Philosophy, with some choice of questions available in each period. The written examination on the “Ancient” and “Medieval” portions of the written examination will be given in one three-hour block one day, with the “Modern” and “Contemporary” portions given in a three-hour block on a later day. In order to pass the written part of the comprehensive examination, students must receive passing grades on at least six of the eight essays, with a minimum of one passing essay in
each of the four historical periods. Students failing the written portion will be expected to take some time to become better prepared and then retake all of it.

Students who pass the written portion of the comprehensive examination will be scheduled for a follow-up, one-hour oral examination a few days later. There will be three examiners selected by the Program Director and/or the Department Chairperson. Any student who has failed one or two of the written questions should expect to be challenged to show improvement in those areas. The oral exam will not be limited to the eight essays the student has written. Other areas considered appropriate for the oral exam include: (a) other parts of the reading list on which the student did not write essays; (b) material covered in the philosophy courses taken in the program; (c) the student’s own perspective on philosophical issues such as the possibility of metaphysical knowledge or human freedom; and (d) a sense of intended directions for the student’s thesis.

Students will be given a maximum of three attempts to pass the written comprehensive exam. A student who fails the oral exam on the first attempt will be allowed one more attempt to pass it. The second attempt at passing the oral exam can be made no sooner than two months, but no later than sixth months, after the first attempt. In the event that a student has not successfully passed the written comps after three attempts, or has not passed the oral comp after the second attempt, the student will not be permitted to complete the program.

Logic Requirement

All students must pass a logic exam as part of the degree requirements. The exam will cover material up to and including predicate calculus. Students will have the option of preparing for the exam on their own or of preparing for it by taking the Logic course which is regularly offered by the department. The exam will be offered twice a year (late in fall semester and late in spring semester), with flexibility for demonstrated student need. Students will be allowed two attempts to pass the exam.

M.A. Thesis

Each M.A. student is responsible for choosing, in consultation with the Program Director, a thesis topic and a thesis director who is ready, willing, and qualified to direct it. The subject matter must be philosophically significant, and the director should (ordinarily) be a member of our Philosophy Department. The approval of the Program Director and thesis director is required.

The thesis should clearly articulate and defend the student’s considered judgment on some philosophical topic or issue. As such, the thesis cannot merely be a report on the views some philosophers have offered on that topic or issue. The thesis should demonstrate the student’s ability to research an issue, exercise critical judgment, and organize a clear and cogent presentation of the results. The thesis normally runs between 80 and 125 pages of text and notes. The completion of a thesis prospectus is required.
before a student can register for the six-credit thesis. The prospectus should include a tentative thesis or project statement, some statement of method to be used, an outline of the major points to be covered, and a bibliography of the major works to be consulted. A sample copy of the prospectus format is available. The prospectus must be signed by the student, the thesis director, and the Program Director. After consultation with the thesis director, the Program Director will assign a second reader for the thesis. The prospectus must be approved before further work on the thesis is begun.

**Language Requirement**

The M.A. program has no language requirement, but a thesis director may require a student to have competency in translating texts from a foreign language into English depending on the student's thesis topic.

**Academic Honesty**

All of our students should be familiar with and are expected to follow Gonzaga’s Academic Honesty Policy, as it is stated in both our Graduate Catalogue and our Student Handbook.

**Grievances**

Students with grievances should try to resolve them at the source closest to the problem (for example, the teachers with whom there are grievances). If this has failed or seems impractical, they should take such grievances to the Program Director and/or the Department Chairperson. In cases of harassment, the policies and procedures in the Student Handbook should be followed.