

Master of Arts Program in Philosophy

Graduate Handbook

1 Program Requirements and Policies	2
1.1 Coursework	2
1.2 M.A. Thesis.....	2
1.3 Good Standing Requirements and Academic Probation.....	2
1.3.1 <i>University Requirements for Good Standing</i>	2
1.3.2 <i>Academic Probation</i>	2
1.4 Additional Program Policies	2
1.4.1 <i>Incompletes</i>	2
1.4.2 <i>Advising</i>	3
1.4.3 <i>Policy on Small Discussion Seminars and Small Discussion Groups</i>	4
1.4.4 <i>GSAS Policies and Procedures</i>	4
1.5 Dual Degrees	4
1.5.1 <i>Philosophy M.A. and Law J.D. Degree Program</i>	4
1.5.2 <i>Philosophy M.A. and Advanced Certificate in Digital Humanities</i>	4
2 Fellowships and Financial Support.....	5
2.1 Tuition and Fellowship Support	5
2.2 Conference Funding	5
3 Climate and Diversity	6
Appendix: Advising Guidelines.....	8

1 Program Requirements and Policies

- In normal circumstances, students are expected to complete all degree requirements within three or four semesters.

1.1 Coursework

- The degree requirements include 32 points (typically, eight courses) of graduate study. At least 24 points must be earned through classes offered by the NYU philosophy department. Courses taken outside the NYU philosophy department, as well as transfer credits, must receive departmental approval.

1.2 M.A. Thesis

- The degree requirements also include a substantial research paper of appropriate quality on a topic chosen by the student, which may be written either in connection with a seminar or under the supervision of a departmental adviser, and which must receive a grade of B+ or better, by both the course instructor/adviser and the DGS. The paper should be around 12,000 words and demonstrate the ability to carry out philosophical research and writing at a level appropriate for entrance into a philosophy PhD. program.

1.3 Good Standing Requirements and Academic Probation

1.3.1 University Requirements for Good Standing

- To be in good standing, the Graduate School requires that students maintain a minimum GPA of 3.0 and must have successfully completed 66 percent of credits attempted while at NYU, not including the current semester. Courses with grades of “I”, “NR”, “W”, and “F” are not considered successfully completed.
- The degree must be completed within 5 calendar years after the date of first enrollment in that master’s program.

1.3.2 Academic Probation

- GSAS requires that students who fail the criteria for good standing be placed on academic probation.

1.4 Additional Program Policies

1.4.1 Incompletes

- There are strict departmental and university requirements governing incompletes.

- GSAS policy on incompletes: An unresolved grade, “I”, reverts to F one year after the beginning of the semester in which the course was taken unless an extension of the incomplete grade has been approved by the Vice Dean. At the request of the departmental DGS and with the approval of the course instructor, the Vice Dean will review requests for an extension of an incomplete grade. A request for an extension of incomplete must be submitted before the end of one year from the beginning of the semester in which the course was taken. An extension of an incomplete grade may be requested for a period of up to, but not exceeding, one year. Only one one-year extension of an incomplete may be granted.
- Philosophy Department policy on incompletes, for all graduate courses: The course instructor sets all course deadlines and determines the course policy on incompletes. In many cases, that policy may be to permit no incompletes whatsoever, so it is imperative that you consult your instructor for specific guidelines. However, in all Philosophy Department graduate courses, the following limiting condition on incompletes applies. Subject to the exception described below, all coursework must be completed and submitted by the first day of class of the semester immediately following the semester in which the course was taken, on penalty of receiving an F in the course. This means that all work for fall courses must be submitted by the first day of spring classes, and all work for spring courses must be submitted by the first day of fall classes. Absolutely no incompletes beyond this are permitted except by filing, in advance, a formal written request with both the Director of Graduate Studies and the course instructor. The request should be filed by e-mail, and must (1) explain the reason for seeking the extension; (2) detail a specific plan for completion, describing the work that has been completed to date and the work that remains to be done; and (3) propose a new deadline. Requests will not be granted automatically. Moreover, except under extraordinary circumstances, the written request must be filed with both the DGS and the course instructor at least one week in advance of the relevant deadline (the first day of class of the semester immediately following the semester in which the course was taken).

1.4.2 Advising

- Each student is assigned an advisor upon entering the M.A. program.
- Advisors and advisees should meet at least twice per term. It is normal for one meeting to take place at the beginning of the term, and another to take place toward the end of the term. A third meeting, occurring roughly midway through the semester, is encouraged, but not required. Faculty urge students not to hesitate asking for a third or additional meetings if such meetings would be helpful. Students and their advisors are encouraged to set aside some meeting time for unstructured discussion, conducted without a fixed agenda. For

suggested topics and other guidelines, students and advisors should consult the document *Advising Guidelines*, included as an appendix to this handbook.

- Shortly before the end of classes of each semester, students are asked to complete a brief self report form where they summarize their activities during the semester, and comment on their progress. The completed form is sent to both the Director of Graduate Studies and the student's advisor.

1.4.3 Policy on Small Discussion Seminars and Small Discussion Groups

- The department aspires to offer three graduate seminars per term that are designated as "small discussion seminars," which means that attendance is limited to NYU Philosophy Ph.D. and M.A. students only, except by permission of the instructor.
- If a graduate seminar is routinely attended by more than fifteen people, there will be a regular small discussion group meeting. These meetings may take place weekly, or every two to three weeks, depending on need. Attendance at these small discussion group meetings is limited to NYU Philosophy Ph.D. and M.A. students only, except by permission of the instructor.

1.4.4 GSAS Policies and Procedures

- Philosophy M.A. students are subject to all general policies and procedures governing M.A. programs that are issued by the Graduate School of Arts and Science (GSAS). These policies and procedures are summarized in the [GSAS Policies and Procedures Manual](#).

1.5 Dual Degrees

1.5.1 Philosophy M.A. and Law J.D. Degree Program

- Students at the New York University School of Law may pursue an M.A.-J.D. dual degree program in philosophy and law.
- The School of Law requires 83 credits of study for the J.D. However, in the dual degree program, up to 12 law school credits for courses in the GSAS may be applied in satisfaction of this requirement. The M.A. requires 32 points of course work, but 8 points taken in the School of Law may be applied to the M.A. Thus a student need only earn a total of 95 points for the dual degree rather than the 115 needed if the degrees were completed separately.
- All other requirements for the M.A. as listed above must also be met.
- The requirements for the J.D. degree can be found [here](#).
- It should be possible to complete the J.D./M.A. in three or three and a half years.

1.5.2 Philosophy M.A. and Advanced Certificate in Digital Humanities

- The M.A. in Philosophy requires 32 points and the Advanced Certificate in Digital Humanities requires 20 points, 52 points in total if each degree is done separately. The dual degree allows the double counting of the 8 points of Approved Electives in the Advanced Certificate toward the required General Electives of the M.A. in Philosophy, resulting in a total of 44 points required to earn both degrees.
- The required points for the dual degree are earned by completing the following: Philosophy Electives (24 points); Introduction to Programming, DHSS-GA 1120 (4 points); Approved Digital Humanities Electives (8 points), and two of the following four courses (8 points): Programming Applications, DHSS-GA 1123; Web Development, DHSS-GA 1122; Working with Data, DHSS-GA 1121; Statistics: Understanding and Using Data, DHSS-GA 1100.
- All other requirements of the M.A. in Philosophy described in section 1 remain the same in the dual degree program.

2 Fellowships and Financial Support

2.1 Tuition and Fellowship Support

- M.A. students normally receive a partial tuition scholarship towards the 32 units required for the M.A. The terms of each scholarship are specified in the student's admission letter from GSAS. The precise amount of the scholarship depends on the number of incoming MA students, as the department has access to a fixed number of tuition credits per incoming class.
- M.A. students are encouraged to apply for outside fellowships, to help with tuition, fees, and living expenses. Those receiving outside fellowships are eligible to participate in the GSAS Tuition Incentives Program (TIP), which provides tuition credits in proportion to the award received. For more information, see [here](#).

2.2 Conference Funding

- M.A. students whose work is accepted for conference presentation may receive grants to support conference travel and/or accommodation from the conferences themselves. Students are encouraged to inquire about such support, and applying for any such support is a condition for receiving NYIP grants (see below).
- The Dean's Student Travel Grant Program, a resource of GSAS, provides funds to graduate students in the humanities, social sciences and sciences for travel to professional meetings and conferences to present invited papers or posters. Information on this program can be found [here](#).

- It is important to note that there are three application periods for Dean’s Student Travel Grants, in October, February, and June. Students are encouraged to plan ahead, and to meet these deadlines even if they are not yet sure whether their conference presentations will be accepted. Application to this travel grant program is a condition for eligibility on the NYIP travel grants (see below).
- A separate source of travel grants is the Student Senators Council (SSC) Travel Awards. Information about these awards, including deadlines and eligibility, can be found [here](#). Applications for the following academic year are normally due the prior May.
- A final source of funding for Philosophy graduate students is the New York Institute of Philosophy (NYIP). The aim of the NYIP Travel Award is to support Ph.D. and MA students’ efforts to attend and participate in meaningful academic conferences. As there is a limited budget with which to reimburse students for travel to such conferences, decisions will be made based on the availability of funds and on a first-come basis, the importance of a given conference or program as it relates to a student’s academic and professional growth, and the role a student will play (presenter, panelist, commentator, etc.). More details on this program can be found on the philosophy department’s [intranet](#).

3 Climate and Diversity

- The philosophy department places great emphasis on maintaining a respectful, safe, and supportive environment for all who work within it— including faculty, students, staff, and visitors—regardless of disability, gender identity, nationality, race, religion, socioeconomic background, or sexual orientation.
- NYU philosophers do not tolerate harassment or discrimination, and strongly support efforts to remove barriers to inclusiveness in philosophy as a discipline. We are concerned to ensure that the department is a place where all of its members can thrive.
- The department has an ongoing Committee on Climate, Diversity, and Inclusiveness, aimed at sustaining these commitments, and a designated faculty member who serves as point person for interpersonal issues including harassment.
- The HIPPO (Helpful Interpersonal Point Person). Every year, the philosophy department designates one faculty member to serve as HIPPO. All members of the department are invited to bring concerns about any kind of negative experience or situation in the department, lived through or witnessed, to the

HIPPO. The HIPPO's role is to create a safe environment, listen, and help initiate the required steps to address the concerns.

- For more information and resources about the department's climate and diversity policies and initiatives, click [here](#).

Appendix: Advising Guidelines

The purpose of this document is to articulate a shared understanding and set of expectations for graduate student advising in the Philosophy Department. It is intended to offer guidance both for faculty members in structuring their advising, and for students in understanding what they can expect from their advisor, and their own role in the advising relationship.

1. Frequency

Advisors and their advisees are expected to meet at least twice per term, as specified in the PhD and MA student handbooks. They are encouraged to meet a third time, or more often, as needed. Professors are more powerful and tend to have more rigid schedules than students; this can make it difficult for students to call for meetings. Advisors should therefore be proactive in initiating meetings, yet both advisors and advisees should aim to make regular meetings happen, and students are urged to feel comfortable asking for meetings whenever these would be useful.

2. Topics

The following topics should be part of advising conversations, as appropriate to the PhD or MA program and the student's phase in the program. It should generally be understood that an advisor is just one of the resources available to students in the department; students should feel free to reach out to whomever might be in a position to help them and take advantage of the workshops which are being offered on these topics.

Degree progress.

Advisors should help students plan their progress through the program. In the case of PhD students, this includes keeping track of the satisfaction of distribution requirements, aiding in the decision on a supervisor for the third-year review preparation course, and finding a prospectus topic and prospectus advisor. Generally, advisors should be proactive in inquiring about problems in the degree progress. Advisors should be familiar with the degree requirements and oversee the student's progress. But students are also expected to be familiar with the degree requirements and bear ultimate responsibility for checking to make sure all requirements are met.

Advisors are also responsible for transmitting written feedback from the graduate student review meeting to their advisees.

Philosophical development.

One purpose of the coursework phase is to acquaint students with a broad horizon of philosophical topics and to help them identify their more specific interests. While students receive feedback from their course instructors on topics covered by the course, advisors are in a unique position to help advisees in guiding them through their interests more broadly. Advisors should therefore seek to learn the interests of their advisees and help with identifying areas of literature to look at and research avenues to pursue, possibly pointing out colleagues or graduate students working on related issues for additional help. Students are encouraged to make use of their advisor as a resource in this sense by bringing up their broader interests.

Wider academic development.

In graduate school, students do not only have to learn what good philosophy is, but also how they can develop their own personal routines with which they can produce good philosophy. They can benefit from mentoring regarding these matters just as much as from mentoring on academic issues. If students want advice about topics such as time management, balancing work and personal time, and other matters, they should not hesitate to raise these topics. Advisors are happy to talk about these topics but often can't tell if a student wants such advice and it can be awkward to volunteer it if the student doesn't ask.

3. The dynamics of advising conversations

There are some themes which seem to be common hurdles for advising to go well. Often these revolve around students feeling insecure, and afraid of making mistakes or revealing gaps in their knowledge, and therefore not being forthcoming. Advisors can help by approaching students actively in a supportive and curious way. The following points might be helpful for reflecting on a good advising relationship.

a) It is especially important to ensure the inclusion of students from groups underrepresented in philosophy. This includes making sure that they receive at least the same amount of attention as any other student. Also, some students might be inclined

to interpret disagreement meant to be part of philosophical discourse as a signal of exclusion from that philosophical discourse. For students of any background, an adversarial style of conversation where they are primarily challenged to defend their position can be overwhelming. A more explorative and collaborative conversation about how a position could possibly be defended can be more productive.

b) Many students do not want to be disrespectful by being too demanding. Everyone is busy. Hence, even if the advisor wants to be available and wants to help, if this is not being communicated explicitly, students might be reluctant to be forceful in arranging for a meeting during busy weeks, or to initiate a meeting in the first place.

It is helpful to keep in mind that professors and students likely experience their advising relationship very differently. For a professor, initiating a meeting might be as easy as seeing that there is a free hour on some day in the week and asking the student whether they are available. For a student, just writing an email to ask for a meeting can require substantive deliberation about whether asking for the meeting is appropriate and becoming stressed over the appropriate tone for such an email.

c) Advisees and advisors should feel encouraged to meet in informal settings, for instance for lunch or coffee. Meetings in a more formal setting like the office can lead to a dynamic where both parties want to go through a checklist of topics in a cursory way. Ideally, an informal setting allows students to be less concerned with appearing competent and making a good impression and gives more room to approach more difficult topics.

d) Some students and professors are probably most comfortable when talking about concrete philosophical issues because that is what they are usually concerned with. And while it can be important to discuss concrete philosophical issues in advising conversations, it is important not to neglect more pressing issues and the perhaps more awkward conversation about them. It is worth being aware of this dynamic and important to make room for non-philosophical topics in the conversation.

e) Meeting first-year students early on in their first semester is particularly important in order to help them find a place in the department. However, while first-year advising is important, students also encounter many new challenges in their second year; PhD

students for instance are faced with the third-year review process and the prospectus phase after that. Both advisees and advisors should therefore not assume that in the second year advising becomes less important. Meetings should continue to occur at least twice per term (and more if needed).

f) If the advisor is providing the advisee with feedback on written work, advisors and advisees are encouraged to communicate directly about what form of feedback the student finds most useful and what form of feedback is feasible, and on what kind of schedule, for the professor. Some students find it easier to receive feedback to their work and to give responses in written form; others might prefer verbal exchange. Advisors and advisees should discuss the balance of these forms of feedback. The timing of feedback is also important. Timely feedback is always desirable, of course, but in cases when that is not possible, it is helpful for advisors to let their advisees know in what time frame they can expect to receive comments so that they can plan their work accordingly.

This document was last revised on 16/03/21.