

# PHILOSOPHY, PH.D.

## Degree Requirements (60 Post-Baccalaureate Hours)

Doctoral students who enter the Ph.D. program without a master's degree in philosophy must pass 16 graduate courses. At least 8 of these courses must be 700-level and be taken in traditional face-to-face format.

Doctoral students who enter the Ph.D. program with a master's degree in philosophy must pass 8 or more courses. At least 6 of these courses must be 700-level and be taken in traditional face-to-face format.

Both cases require at least 12 additional hours of dissertation preparation.

### Core Courses

Must successfully pass within the first 2 years in the program.

### Philosophy of Science Requirement

Pass at least one course.

### History Requirement

Ph.D. students must pass at least one course in each of three historical periods, normally to be one course from each of the following three lists:

#### Ancient to Renaissance

Course	Title	Credits
PHIL 505	Plato	3
PHIL 506	Aristotle	3
PHIL 507	Medieval Philosophy	3
PHIL 526	Hellenistic Philosophy	3
PHIL 540	Renaissance Philosophy	3
PHIL 701	Studies in Ancient Philosophy	3

#### Early Modern

Course	Title	Credits
PHIL 501	British Empiricism	3
PHIL 502	Continental Rationalism	3
PHIL 508	Hume	3
PHIL 509	Kant	3
PHIL 705	Studies in 17th- and 18th-Century Philosophy	3
PHIL 707	Studies in 19th-Century Philosophy	3
PHIL 723	Hegel	3

#### Late Modern

Course	Title	Credits
PHIL 503	Analytic Philosophy	3
PHIL 504	Phenomenology and Existentialism	3
PHIL 513	Philosophy of History	3
PHIL 534	Contemporary European Social Philosophy	3
PHIL 706	Studies in Continental Philosophy	3
PHIL 707	Studies in 19th-Century Philosophy	3
PHIL 709	Studies in 20th-Century Philosophy	3
PHIL 721	Pragmatism	3

Note: PHIL 760, Special Topics in Philosophy, and PHIL 797, Independent Study, may count as history courses depending on the material covered. PHIL 707 may count as satisfying either early or late modern history

requirement depending on the material covered. These determinations are made by the Director of Graduate Studies in consultation with the instructor.

### Language Requirement

Learning a foreign language is an important part of professionalization as a philosopher. Doing so is often central to gaining proficiency in the history of philosophy and it enables one to engage important work being done by scholars who write in languages other than English. If a student's research area demands knowledge of a particular foreign language, the student will be expected to be proficient in that language.

The Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures administers tests of foreign language competency.

Satisfying the foreign language requirement may entail one of the following:

- Successful completion of an intensive reading course in a language approved by The Graduate School
- Passing grade on a language reading proficiency examination administered by the Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures. A student may not take the competency test more than 3 times.

Students whose native language is not English may be able to use English to fulfill the foreign language requirement. An official TOEFL score of 243 for computer-based test or 590 for paper-based test.

If a doctoral student's comprehensive examination committee determines that the research area demands knowledge of one or more foreign languages, the student is required to demonstrate proficiency in at least one of those languages. This applies to all students, including those whose native language is not English. Only if the required research language is the foreign student's native language may English be used to fulfill this requirement. In rare cases, a comprehensive examination committee may determine it advisable to substitute a substantial competence in a research method relevant to their research for the foreign language requirement. The Director of Graduate Studies will give final approval of the substitution and ultimate approval of the substitution will be given by the Dean of the Graduate School.

Students should make arrangements to complete the foreign language and/or research methods requirement by discussing options with their advisory committee early in the program. Certification of foreign language (and any substitution) remains valid for 8 years.

### PhD Advisory Committees

Each student in the Ph.D. program will be supervised by three successive advisory committees: an initial advisory committee, a comprehensive exam committee, and a dissertation committee. These committees assist the student in developing an appropriate course of study, evaluate student progress, provide guidance and counsel, certify the completion of various degree requirements, and ensure that professional standards have been met in completing those requirements. The composition of each committee should reflect the student's interests and the area in which the student is likely to write a dissertation, though the constitution of these committees may change as the student progresses through the program.

### Student Portfolios

Each doctoral student must maintain a "portfolio" of achievements in the program. This portfolio will be an essential tool for tracking and assessing the student's progress in the program and is the student's

Ph.D. qualifying exam, as explained in the following section. The contents of the portfolio will be available only to the student and to members of the department faculty.

The Department's annual assessment of the graduate program as a whole will be based to some degree on a summary review of current student portfolios. Student portfolios will include at least the following items:

- The student's statement of purpose and writing sample submitted as part of their application for admission.
- A research paper representing one's best writing from each year in the program (expected by August 15 each year), until one has completed their coursework and is working exclusively on materials for the Ph.D. comprehensive exam.
- All signed advisement forms: two per year until the Ph.D. comprehensive exam is passed.
- A syllabus for each course for which the student is the instructor of record (due within a month after instruction begins).
- A summary of student evaluations of one's teaching for each course where one serves either as an instructional assistant (GIA) or as a teaching assistant (GTA), for as long as one is involved in teaching at USC.
- Copies of all classroom visitation reports for any class for which the student serves in some instructional capacity and for which such a visitation was scheduled.
- An up-to-date curriculum vitae, including (but not limited to) a chronological record of all GSA/GRA/GIA/GTA duties, a list of publications and works submitted for publication, a list of public presentations at conferences, and any record of service to department, university, community, or profession.
- Evidence of additional service beyond what is reflected in the C.V., such as serving on university committees, helping in organizing conferences, attending colloquia and symposia.

These items should be submitted to the graduate program coordinator who will maintain a digital and a physical copy of the complete portfolio.

Student portfolios will be evaluated by the student's advisory committee every year to assess the student's development toward their professional goals. The student's portfolio and progress will be discussed with the student during the required spring advising meeting.

The faculty as a whole meets at the end of the spring semester to review students' development toward their professional goals and their overall progression through the degree requirements. Students will receive a letter from the Director of Graduate Studies summarizing the results of the annual review. Where a student's progress falls short of expectations, remedies may be prescribed that must be implemented within a specific time frame. Failure to resolve the issues within the specific time frame may result in dismissal from the program.

## Admission to Candidacy

Once a student has successfully completed all of their coursework and resolved any outstanding issues, the student must officially be "admitted to candidacy" in order to become a candidate for the doctoral degree. To be recommended for admission to candidacy, a student must pass the qualifying exam and have satisfied the following requirements.

- The student must have completed all required course work other than PHIL 899.

- The student must have submitted a Doctoral Program of Study (DPOS) form.
- The student must have selected a field for their dissertation work and a supervisor for their comprehensive exam who is most likely the student's dissertation director.
- The student's written work in graduate courses taken at USC must have been strong enough to justify a high expectation of success in the remainder of the program.
- The student must have demonstrated proficiency in any teaching duties assigned throughout the course of their graduate work, either as instructional assistants or teaching assistants.

To be considered for admission to candidacy, the student must contact the Director of Graduate Studies declaring their intention to apply for admission to candidacy. The Director of Graduate Studies will then contact the student's Advisory Committee and, if not already a member of that Committee, the proposed Chair of their Comprehensive Exam Committee, providing a copy of the student's portfolio (which should contain at least two research papers, in addition to teaching materials, and student and peer teaching evaluations).

The portfolio is the Ph.D. qualifying exam. Each member of the Committee will assess the student's portfolio individually, reporting their judgment to the Director of Graduate Studies. If necessary, the Committee will jointly meet with the Director of Graduate Studies to discuss whether the student should be admitted to candidacy.

If the Committee decides that the student should be admitted to candidacy, the Director of Graduate Studies will submit a completed Doctoral Qualifying Exam Verification Form, with the date of the Committee's decision serving as the Date of the Qualifying Exam. If the Committee decides that the student should not be admitted to candidacy, they will determine whether there is a viable strategy for the student to move forward in the program, and if so, that strategy will be relayed to the student by the Director of Graduate Studies.

Final approval for admission to candidacy for the Ph.D. degree is made by the Dean of the Graduate School.

## Dissertation Proposal and Ph.D. Comprehensive Examination

The Ph.D. Comprehensive Examination is designed to assist the student in writing a dissertation. It is taken after all required course work has been completed, at a stage when a dissertation topic has been selected and a

provisional but detailed proposal drawn up. The comprehensive exam is in two parts, written and oral. A dissertation proposal will serve as the cornerstone of the written portion of the Comprehensive Exam. Procedures for submitting a dissertation proposal and the structure of the Ph.D. Comprehensive Examination are as follows:

- Following admission to candidacy, the student in consultation with the Graduate Director and the student's initial advisory committee should select an appropriate and willing Ph.D. comprehensive exam committee from among the department's Graduate Faculty. The Doctoral Committee Appointment Request form, G-DCA, must be submitted at this stage, checking the box for the Comprehensive Exam.
- A dissertation proposal should be formally approved by the student's Ph.D. comprehensive exam committee no later than the midpoint of the fall semester of the fourth year (or the third year for students with a previous MA). Dissertation proposals can vary in format. For

example, they can include one or more of the following: a dissertation outline, a multi-page dissertation overview, a synopsis of each chapter, a sample chapter in essentially finished form, one or more finished papers on a similar topic, a substantial bibliography, a literature review, etc. What is to be included should be determined in consultation with the student's comprehensive exam committee. Overall, this written material should clearly and substantially identify the topic, thesis, and argumentative structure of the proposed dissertation. It should also provide ample evidence of the student's familiarity with relevant primary and secondary literature.

- The combination of written materials constituting a dissertation proposal (this may include one or more chapter drafts, an annotated reading list, a detailed dissertation plan) will serve as the written portion of the Ph.D. comprehensive exam.
- An oral examination will normally take place in the fall semester of the fourth year, roughly a week after approval of the written dissertation proposal. This exam takes as its starting point the written proposal but may range more broadly in order for the committee to ascertain the viability of the proposed research, specifically to determine that the proposed project is worth doing, that it is doable in a timely manner, and that the student is capable of completing the project.
- Immediately after the oral examination the committee meets to determine whether the student has passed or failed. The decision is made by majority vote. A student who fails may apply to take the examination a second time and may also apply to have the membership of the committee changed. Changes in committee membership must be approved by the Dean of the Graduate School. Normally the second examination will be taken no more than six months after the first. A student who fails the examination a second time or who chooses not to be re-examined will not be permitted to continue in the Ph.D. program but, upon request, may be awarded a terminal M.A. degree. If approved, the student must have fulfilled all MA degree requirements by the end of the respective academic year, including passing the MA Comprehensive Exam and filing the appropriate Change-of-Status form with the Graduate School.

Completion of the Ph.D. comprehensive examination is expected to occur by the end of the Fall semester of the fourth year, leaving time in the program for the student to work on an approved dissertation topic and to prepare for academic job placement.

#### **Ph.D. Dissertation and Dissertation Defense**

No later than five years after passing the Ph.D. Comprehensive Examination, a Ph.D. student must complete a dissertation. The dissertation topic must be approved by a committee of graduate faculty members, consisting of the advisor, two other graduate faculty members judged competent in the field, and one graduate faculty member from outside the Philosophy Department. The student is expected to have whatever specialized skills are required for the dissertation topic chosen (e.g., familiarity with one of the sciences, or proficiency in a foreign language). At the time the dissertation is submitted the student must also provide an abstract of the dissertation.

To complete the requirements for the Ph.D., the student must successfully defend their dissertation before an examining committee appointed by the Director of Graduate Studies and approved by the Dean of the Graduate School. The committee will consist of no fewer than four members, of whom at least one is from another department. Typically, these will be the same professors who are members of the student's Dissertation Committee. The dissertation defense should take

place not less than thirty days before the date at which the candidate expects to receive their degree. If a student does not complete their dissertation within the five year period that begins with passing the Ph.D. Comprehensive Examination, it is up to the student's dissertation advisor to determine what counts as satisfactory progress in each subsequent year.