



QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY  
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

# Graduate Student Handbook

*2026–2027*

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## Table of Contents

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|                                                   |    |
|---------------------------------------------------|----|
| Introduction .....                                | 4  |
| Resources for Graduate Students .....             | 4  |
| Graduate Coordinator .....                        | 5  |
| Board of Graduate Studies (BOGS) .....            | 6  |
| Graduate Assistant .....                          | 6  |
| Committee of Graduate Studies (COGS) .....        | 6  |
| Graduate Student Committee .....                  | 7  |
| PGSA .....                                        | 7  |
| Colloquium .....                                  | 7  |
| Library .....                                     | 7  |
| Reading Groups .....                              | 8  |
| Graduate Student Teaching .....                   | 8  |
| Teaching Assistants (TAs) .....                   | 9  |
| Teaching Fellows (TFs) .....                      | 10 |
| M.A. and PhD Degree Requirements .....            | 11 |
| Completion of Course Work .....                   | 12 |
| Procedure for Reviewing Assignment Grades .....   | 12 |
| Procedure for Reviewing Final Course Grades ..... | 13 |
| The M.A. Program .....                            | 13 |
| M.A. Capstone Assessments .....                   | 14 |
| Sample Proposal for an MA Thesis or MRP .....     | 17 |
| The PhD Program .....                             | 19 |
| The Doctoral Dissertation .....                   | 23 |
| Academic Integrity .....                          | 24 |
| Leaves of Absence .....                           | 24 |

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|                               |    |
|-------------------------------|----|
| Professional Development..... | 24 |
| Awards in Philosophy.....     | 25 |
| Fellowships.....              | 26 |
| Miscellaneous .....           | 26 |

## Introduction

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*Welcome new graduate students, and welcome back continuing graduate students, to Philosophy at Queen's!*

*This handbook describes policies and procedures in the Department of Philosophy at Queen's University. It also provides some information about the many resources at Queen's. The handbook is issued each summer and all material is subject to revision.*

*Some of the entries here are formal documents, others are less formal suggestions as to how best to profit from your studies at Queen's. The handbook should be read in conjunction with the Calendar of the School of Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs (SGSPA) at <https://www.queensu.ca/academic-calendar/graduate-studies/> as well as the PSAC Collective Agreement at <http://www.psac901.org>. All faculty and students should be familiar with the contents of these various publications and the relevant regulations.*

*Please contact me if you have any questions - about the handbook, your studies, or life at Queen's. I'm always happy to hear from you and I'll try to help as best I can.*

*With very best wishes for an enjoyable and productive year at Queen's,*

**Meena Krishnamurthy, Coordinator of Graduate Studies**

*meena.krishnamurthy@queensu.ca*

August 2026

## Resources for Graduate Students

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**School of Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs:** Resources for graduate students and supervisors can be found at: <https://www.queensu.ca/grad-postdoc/>

**SGSPA Policies:** See here for Student Code of Conduct, Harassment and Discrimination, Sexual Violence Prevention and Response, EDII, Academic Accommodations for Students with a Disability, Academic Integrity, and others: <https://www.queensu.ca/grad-postdoc/grad-studies/policies>

**New Grad Student Orientation** through SGSPA can be found here: <https://www.queensu.ca/grad-postdoc/grad-studies/orientation/schedule>

**Workshops for Graduate and Professional Students:** Find the various workshops to support graduate students and PDFs here: <https://www.queensu.ca/grad-postdoc/professional-development/workshops-events>

**Student Wellness Services:** <https://www.queensu.ca/studentwellness/>

**Student Academic Success Services:** An academic support service for undergraduate and graduate students aimed at assisting students, through web resources, consultation and workshops, in refining their core academic skills, thinking skills and self-management skills. A valuable resource. The Writing Centre sets up tutorials to go over drafts of papers and offers general workshops on writing papers and marking. <http://sass.queensu.ca>

**Society of Graduate and Professional Students (SGPS):** SGPS represents the interests of its members at a university wide level as well as providing some important benefits (e.g. their health and dental plan), services (e.g. student advisors) and social and recreational activities. The SGPS defends and expands students' rights, lobbies the administration as well as the provincial and federal governments, offers small grants and other assistance to students, and participates in university governance at the Senate, the Board of Trustees and about 40 committees. <https://sgps.ca>

**The Queen's University International Centre:** Mitchell Hall, Room 208. QUIC is a support service for all members of the Queen's community and through its activities promotes an internationally informed and cross-culturally sensitive learning environment. <https://quic.queensu.ca/>

**2SLGBTQI+ resources:** This page provides links to the various resources available to the Queen's community <https://www.queensu.ca/hreo/education/positive-space>

**Indigenous Student Centre:** The Four Directions Indigenous Student Centre is the best starting point for resources available to Indigenous students: <https://www.queensu.ca/fourdirections/>

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## Graduate Coordinator

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In 2026–2027, the Graduate Coordinator and the Chair of the Board of Graduate Studies is Meena Krishnamurthy. The Graduate Coordinator has the following responsibilities:

- In conjunction with the School of Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs and the Graduate Assistant, answer inquiries and correspond with applicants.
- Be the first point of contact for graduate students with respect to course selection, program options, comprehensive year requirements, and requirements for thesis proposals.
- Maintain liaison with SGSPA with respect to policies and individual students.
- Structure and maintain the overall budget for graduate funding and related income and expenses.
- Assign Teaching Assistants to courses.
- Ensure that all graduate students find Supervisors for their theses and dissertations.

- Facilitate the examination of M.A. theses and Ph.D. dissertations, as well as defenses of Ph.D. dissertation proposals.
- Provide assistance to graduate students applying for fellowships.
- Offer advice and support to graduate students regarding any concerns they may have about their studies, financial situation, or matters pertaining to their wellbeing more generally.

## Board of Graduate Studies (BOGS)

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The Board of Graduate Studies (BOGS) is a faculty committee consisting of the Graduate Coordinator and two other faculty members. In 2026-27, its members are Meena Krishnamurthy (Chair), David Bakhurst, and Udo Schuklenk. The responsibilities of BOGS include:

- Reviewing applications and recommending acceptance or rejection to the School of Graduate Studies.
- Recommending individual students for fellowships and scholarships.
- Making recommendations to the Graduate Coordinator and Head of Department in the event that a student has not met requirements.
- Regularly evaluating policies concerning graduate programs and proposing any changes to the department.
- Meeting with the Committee of Graduate Studies (COGS).

## Graduate Assistant

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The Graduate Assistant, Jen McLaren, handles all administrative matters concerning graduate students including admission files, maintaining ongoing student files, managing paperwork concerning coursework, and student programs.

## Committee of Graduate Studies (COGS)

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The Committee of Graduate Studies (COGS) is a committee comprised of the members of BOGS and three students elected by the graduate student body. Its role is to consult with BOGS on matters of policy and practice concerning the department's graduate programs.

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## Graduate Student Committee

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The students on COGS are to be known as the Graduate Student Committee, which serves as a representative of the graduate student body as a whole, as well as a liaison between graduate students and COGS.

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## PGSA

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The Philosophy Graduate Student Association advocates for and represents the needs, interests and concerns of its membership within the department and the University; seeks to contribute to the intellectual growth and development of a spirit of community within the department and the University; serves as a medium of communication between its members, other members of the department, and organizations within the University; and from time to time organizes academic, social and recreational activities for its members. Elections for executive positions (including the student members of COGS) are held in the Fall.

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## Colloquium

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The Colloquium meets most Thursday afternoons during term (4 :00- 6:00 pm, Watson 517), and in addition, the department sometimes hosts special University lectures.

The Colloquium provides an opportunity for students to become aware of what is happening in different fields of philosophy, and to engage in discussion on a wide range of issues. Masters and Doctoral students are amongst our most regular and enthusiastic participants.

Senior PhD students are also welcome to speak to the Colloquium Coordinator, Elliot Paul, about presenting a paper as part of the Colloquium series.

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## Library

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The University library has an excellent collection of print, multi-media, and electronic scholarly materials. The library can provide assistance to students who would like to better learn how to use its resources.

Please contact Sylvia Andrychuk, the Research and Instruction Librarian: [andrychs@queensu.ca](mailto:andrychs@queensu.ca).

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## Reading Groups

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The Philosophy Department has had a number of reading/study groups over the years, focusing on a range of topics, including metaphysics, philosophy of education, animal rights, feminism, cognitive science, and political philosophy.

These groups provide an opportunity for faculty and graduate students to read and discuss philosophical writings together, and sessions tend to be lively, stimulating, friendly and fun.

The Political Philosophy Reading Group, coordinated by Christine Sypnowich, has been going for many years. It is an interdisciplinary group with participants from Philosophy, Political Studies, Law, History, Sociology and Economics.

The Faculty of Law, in conjunction with the Departments of Philosophy and Political Studies, runs a Colloquium in Legal, Political and Moral Philosophy with an impressive group of guest speakers on Mondays in the Fall term.

Graduate students are strongly recommended to take advantage of these opportunities to hone their philosophical skills and learn of scholarship in their field. Graduate-student-organized reading groups are also encouraged.

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## Graduate Student Teaching

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Most graduate students in philosophy have the opportunity to contribute to the department's undergraduate program by working as Teaching Assistants (TAs). The department recognizes the considerable contribution made by TAs to the success of its undergraduate program.

Doctoral students who seek a career in philosophy should accumulate significant teaching experience as TAs in a variety of courses, not just those in their area of specialization. In addition, the department recognizes the importance of teaching experience for doctoral students who are seeking an academic career. Subject to financial constraints, the department strives to ensure that doctoral students gain some experience of running their own courses, when doing so will not hinder completion of the dissertation by the fifth year of the program.

Graduate Teaching Assistants and Teaching Fellows have negotiated a Collective Agreement through the Public Service Alliance of Canada (Local 901). This can be found on the PSAC website.

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## Teaching Assistants (TAs)

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### Allocation of Teaching Assistantships

According to the PSAC Collective Agreement, Teaching Assistantships are offered according to five preference groups. In group A are those students for whom TAs have been offered as part of the funding package. Students in group A must submit their course preferences no later than 15 days before the start of term. Students in groups B, C, D, and E who wish to apply for a TAship, must submit CV and transcripts by a date set by the department which will be no later than 15 days before the start of the term.

A student may be ineligible for a TAship if he or she has insufficient facility with English to teach effectively. Such a student will be encouraged to take additional English language instruction and may be required to take a language test as proof of competence in English before being given a teaching assignment.

### Responsibilities of Faculty

It is the responsibility of instructors to provide their teaching assistants with a list of all assigned activities to be included within the allotted hours of work. Instructors must meet with their TAs to review the Teaching Assistant Form (Appendix "A" of the Collective Agreement). As indicated in the Form, instructors should make clear their expectations, including details regarding the teaching of classes or seminars, should this be one of the assigned tasks.

### Duties of Teaching Assistants

According to Article 16 of the Collective Agreement, TAs will not work, on average, more than 10 hours a week and no more than 8 hours a day. TAs, as part of their duties, may be expected to attend lectures, grade papers and tests, hold office hours, or, in some cases, lead tutorials. Before your TAship begins, the Graduate Assistant will provide you and your course instructor with a **TA Duty Form**, found in the PSAC Collective Agreement, to assist with determining what duties will be expected in that particular TAship. Please see Article 16 for hours of work, activities, and responsibilities of a TA. Please see Article 23 for conditions regarding leaves of absence.

### Training and Evaluation of Teaching Assistants

There will be a mandatory workshop on teaching for all incoming graduate students held early in Fall term. In addition, students must complete mandatory online disability training sessions in accord with Ontario government legislation. A list of required trainings will be made available to new TAs before the beginning of the school year. Unless otherwise specified, TAs need only complete these trainings once within their TA career.

Instructors should provide guidance to help TAs perform their jobs well. A TA who is experiencing a difficulty with their teaching assignment is advised to discuss the problem with the instructor as soon as possible. In case of any work-related dispute, please see Articles 11 of

the Collective Agreement. If a TA is unable to resolve problems with the instructor, the Graduate Coordinator should be consulted for further assistance.

### Guidelines for TA Duties

To assist both instructors and TAs in planning TA duties, COGS and the department have adopted the following guidelines. Because the nature of assignments and expectations vary, these guidelines may not always be applicable. Whether these guidelines are being followed or whether the instructor has different expectations should be made clear when the instructor and student meet to discuss the Form. Usually, the amounts of time noted below are allowed for these specified tasks. Reading and general preparation should be a component of every TA-ship, as specified below. **NOTE: These are very rough estimates.** TAs should discuss with their course instructor the expectations for grading and how much time is reasonable to spend grading an assignment.

*Marking:* 4-6 page paper = 20 minutes; 6-8 pages = 35 minutes; 8-10 pages = 45 minutes

*Tutorials/Tutorial preparation:* 0-3 hour per week

*Attendance in classes:* 0-3 hours per week

*Reading and general preparation (on top of tutorial preparation):* 2 hours per week

*Student meetings and office hours:* 1 hour per week

Queen's Centre for Teaching and Learning runs a number of workshops on teaching throughout the year. Students are encouraged to make use of the Centre's facilities and the opportunities it provides. See <https://www.queensu.ca/ctl/>.

At the end of each course instructors are expected to complete a written evaluation of each TA's performance. This evaluation is submitted to the Graduate Assistant. It is shown to the TA and a copy is included in his or her personnel file.

Graduate students with general concerns about issues pertaining to teaching are encouraged to bring them to the Graduate Student Committee.

### Teaching Fellows (TFs)

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Teaching Fellows are senior graduate students serving as the instructor for part or all of a course. Teaching Fellows are appointed, according to Article 12.08, according to five preference groups, A-E. No Teaching Fellowships will be offered to candidates in group B until the qualified candidates in group A have been exhausted, and no Fellowships will be offered to candidates in groups C, D, or E until candidates in the previous group have been exhausted. The department will post on its website, at least 22 days before the beginning of term, the courses for which Teaching Fellowships are available, information about how to apply, and the submission date

for applications. TF responsibilities will be set out in the TF Form (Appendix "B" of the Collective Agreement) which will be provided to the TF at least two weeks before the start of term.

For hours of work, activities and areas of responsibility for TFs, please see Article 16 of the Collective Agreement; for leaves of absence, please see Article 23.

For 2026-27, Professor Kerah Gordon-Solman is the Chair of Undergraduate Studies and is responsible for advice on teaching matters. Teaching Fellows should seek advice from the Undergraduate Chair about the production of a syllabus for the course they will be teaching, and about other aspects of designing and running the course.

Teaching Fellows are welcome to consult with the Chair of Undergraduate Studies or any faculty member on teaching matters, particularly with those who have taught the course before. A Teaching Fellow should submit a copy of the proposed syllabus to the Administrative Assistant ([adminphil@queensu.ca](mailto:adminphil@queensu.ca)) before the course begins. Teaching Fellows should raise with the Undergraduate Chair any problems they are having during the course.

A Teaching Fellow who experiences a problem of a serious nature (e.g. a conflict with a student, disruptive behaviour in class, breaches of academic integrity by a member or members of the class, etc.) should raise the matter with the Undergraduate Chair or the Graduate Coordinator as soon as possible.

## M.A. and PhD Degree Requirements

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Please see the SGSPA Graduate Calendar under 'General Regulations' <https://www.queensu.ca/academic-calendar/graduate-studies/general-regulations/> and 'Department of Philosophy,' <https://www.queensu.ca/academic-calendar/graduate-studies/programs-study/philosophy/> for some basic and overarching regulations/requirements. What follows are some additional guidelines for successful completion of your degree.

NB: It is recommended that PhD students acquire one of the following research tools in relation to their area of research: Reading capacity in a language other than English, expertise in a discipline other than philosophy (e.g. English, biology), or a skill set such as statistics.

Candidates who propose to submit a thesis in an area for which knowledge of a particular language or languages other than English is deemed essential must pass an examination in that language(s). Other students are encouraged to acquire such a research tool, as well as evidence that they have done so, in order to enhance their research capacity and employability.

**Course Requirements: All MA or PhD students, in their first year with Queen's Department of Philosophy, must take PHIL 990: Philosophical Methods. PhD students who completed an MA at Queen's and have already taken PHIL 990 as part of that degree do not need to take it again.**

## Completion of Course Work

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It is expected that course work will be completed on time (ie. by the end of the term in which the course is taught). According to department policy, a course will be registered 'Incomplete' (IN) on a transcript only if the student has requested this (in writing) and received the approval of the course instructor and of the Graduate Coordinator or the Head of the Department, who is satisfied that circumstances warrant an extension.

**A course may only retain a grade of IN for one term beyond the term in which the course was delivered.** That is, if a course was taught in Fall term, the grade will only remain as IN until the end of Winter term; if the course was taught in Winter term, the grade will only remain as IN until the end of Spring/Summer term. After this deadline, the grade will automatically lapse to an F.

The department cannot emphasize too much the damaging effect incomplete course work can have, both in terms of finishing the degree in reasonable time, and in terms of prospects for funding, from Queen's or elsewhere. Very slow progress, in the absence of mitigating considerations, also constitutes unsatisfactory performance. If there are mitigating circumstances, it is important that students should talk to the Graduate Coordinator as soon as possible so appropriate adjustments to their program can be made. Please note that the Graduate Calendar states that: 'unsatisfactory performance by the student may cause proceedings to be instituted requiring the student to withdraw.'

## Procedure for Reviewing Assignment Grades

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In the case where a student feels an assignment has been graded incorrectly or unfairly, the student should first attempt to resolve the matter with the course instructor. If the course instructor is unwilling to reconsider the grade, the student may reach out to the Graduate Coordinator to request a second opinion. The Graduate Coordinator and BOGS will consult with the student and the instructor to review the work and the grade.

In the event of dissatisfaction with the ruling of BOGS, an appeal may then be made to the Head of the Department.

Should the Head of Department decide a further review is required, he/she will appoint an ad hoc committee consisting of three members of the department, none of whom are members of the Board of Graduate Studies or the instructor involved in the issue. In addition, a senior graduate student (i.e., one who has already passed their comprehensives) will be a member. The graduate student will not cast a vote concerning the academic standing of the appealing student.

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## Procedure for Reviewing Final Course Grades

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In the case of an unsatisfactory final grade in a course (below B-), the following procedures apply:

1. The Graduate Coordinator will notify the student and the instructor that the Board of Graduate Studies (BOGS) is to review the case.
2. BOGS will consult with the student and the relevant instructor, along with any other instructors the student has had in the graduate program, in order to learn of any circumstances that bear on the case. The student and the relevant instructor have the option of appearing before BOGS.
3. BOGS will make any one of the following recommendations, which will be forwarded to the School of Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs for consideration:
  - a. That the student repeat the course
  - b. That the student take a substitute course
  - c. That the student be required to withdraw from the program

It should be emphasized that in any of these cases, the unsatisfactory grade cannot be removed from the transcript.

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## The M.A. Program

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The M.A. in Philosophy is a 12-month program that is offered with two streams. Students will need to select which stream they intend to follow upon entry to the program, and will not be able to change their stream after the add/drop deadline in September (usually in the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> week of September, please see the University's [Key Dates](#) page for specific date in a given year). **Please note that each type of capstone assessment is associated with a specific stream – students must complete the capstone assessment associated with their stream.**

### Stream 1: M.A. in Philosophy, Thesis Stream

Course Requirements:

- PHIL 990 + 5 additional one-term courses (or equivalent)
- Courses taken must fulfill a distribution requirement by taking at least one course falling under the heading of **Metaphysics and Epistemology**, and at least one course falling under the heading of **Value Theory**. Students whose background is particularly strong in one or the other of these two broad areas may, with the permission of the Graduate

Coordinator, be allowed to substitute other courses for that part of their distribution requirement.

- Courses will be labelled with their relevant heading when sent out by the Grad Assistant during course selection.
- By special arrangement, appropriate graduate courses in other departments may be taken for credit in a philosophy graduate program, with a **limit of one** external course.

Capstone Assessment: Thesis (about 50 pages) and oral defense.

## **Stream 2: M.A. in Philosophy with Specialization in Political and Legal Thought, PLT Stream**

Course Requirements:

- PHIL 990 + 5 additional one-term courses (or equivalent)
- At least 4 courses must be **PLT-designated** courses (this is a collaborative, interdisciplinary program, so the list includes courses in Philosophy, Political Studies and Law).
- PLT students do not have to fulfil the distribution requirement outlined in Stream 1.
- By special arrangement, appropriate graduate courses in other departments that are not on the list of PLT-designated courses may be taken for credit, with a **limit of one** external, non-PLT course.

Capstone Assessment: Major Research Paper (about 50 pages).

**NB: Please note that while Undergraduate courses may be taken or audited for interest, they absolutely cannot be used to fulfill credit requirements for a graduate degree.**

## **M.A. Capstone Assessments**

### **General Requirements**

The Graduate School requires that “a thesis be expressed in a satisfactory form consistent with the discipline concerned, and display a scholarly approach to the subject and a thorough knowledge of it. A critical review of previous work related to the subject and a concluding summation of the contribution made in the thesis to scholarship in the chosen field must be included”. In addition, “a Master's thesis should demonstrate that the candidate is capable of original and independent work” (section 8.6, 'Thesis, General Remarks' from the Graduate Studies Calendar).

The requirements for the Major Research Paper (MRP) are the same as the Master's Thesis. Students are expected to produce a work of similar form, length and quality as the M.A. Thesis. The principal difference is that an MRP is not examined at an oral defense nor is it submitted to QSpace.

Consistent with the above, a Philosophy M.A. Thesis/MRP should be understood to be a work that is considerably more extensive and deeper than a substantial term essay. The criterion by which the quality of an acceptable thesis/MRP is judged may be conceptualized as follows: Were it a substantial term essay by a graduate student, it would be deemed to merit a mark of not less than 80%. It can be a good starting point for Master's students to take a paper written for a seminar course and expand it into a deeper and more complete discussion.

### Thesis/MRP Proposal

M.A. students must submit a proposal for their Thesis/MRP. The deadline for submission of proposals is the first weekday of February in any given year. **For 2026-2027, the deadline is February 1, 2027.** Proposals should be submitted to the Graduate Assistant.

Your proposal must be accompanied by a form from your nominated Supervisor. Please obtain the [M.A. Supervisor Approval Form](#) online and append a completed copy to your submission. To ensure approval, you must get the proposal and form to your Supervisor in sufficient time for him or her to read it carefully.

The sample in this handbook should give you a good idea of what is expected of the proposal itself. Please keep in mind that the sample should give you a general overview of how a proposal might be formatted, your proposal does not need to mimic this formatting directly.

### Thesis & Oral Defense Completion Process

*For a more detailed breakdown of the process, please see "Process for Completing an MA with Oral Examination" [on our website](#).*

**SGSPA must be notified of an upcoming MA Examination at least 10 working days before the oral defense.** The graduate assistant can help with completing the necessary notification paperwork. Students must also submit a copy of their thesis to their examination committee in the same time frame (at least 10 working days before the defense). Students should submit an electronic copy of the thesis to their committee members and to the Department of Philosophy at [gradphil@queensu.ca](mailto:gradphil@queensu.ca). If a hard copy of the thesis is required by any examiners, please reach out to the graduate assistant. The thesis will be assessed as Pass or Fail at the end of the oral examination.

The examination committee will consist of (a) the Supervisor (b) two additional faculty members, either from the department or from another department at Queen's. The defense is chaired by a member of the Philosophy Department's faculty, often a member of BOGS. It is the supervisor's responsibility to organize the examining committee and Chair, but please reach out to the Graduate Coordinator if you require assistance.

## MRP Completion Process

*For a more detailed breakdown of the process, please see “Process for Completing an MA with MRP” on our website.*

In contrast to Theses, Major Research Papers are not examined at an oral defense, but are graded by two examiners: the Supervisor and the Second Reader.

The supervisor will select a second reader who is sufficiently knowledgeable in the area of study explored in the MRP. The supervisor may consult with the Graduate Coordinator about determining a second reader if needed. The supervisor should then give the examiner's name to the graduate assistant.

The examiners are expected to evaluate the MRP within two weeks of submission. Students should therefore submit an electronic copy of the MRP to their supervisor and second reader, as well as the graduate assistant, at least 10 working days before the date on which they hope to complete their degree. If the supervisor or second reader requires a hard copy, please speak with the graduate assistant.

The possible MRP grades in Philosophy are PASS/FAIL. Both examiners are encouraged to provide the student with written comments on the MRP after assessment.

The examiners will grade the MRP independently and inform the Graduate Coordinator of the outcome, copying the Graduate Assistant on the email. The supervisor should submit a brief written assessment of the MRP. If both examiners give passing grades, the graduate assistant will help with completing the notification paperwork to be sent to SGSPA. If one or both examiners fail the MRP, they should meet with the Graduate Coordinator to consider next steps.

## Thesis/MRP Capstone Deadlines

- **By February 1:** Students must submit their MRP/Thesis proposal, alongside the MA Supervisor Approval Form, to the Graduate Assistant
- **By May 1:** Students, in conversation with their Supervisor, must finalize an Examination Committee (thesis stream) or a Second Reader (MRP stream) and submit this information to the Graduate Assistant. For students in the thesis stream, this notice should include a tentative thesis defense date and a prospective Chair.
- **By August 1:** All degree requirements must be completed by this date. Please note that completion means the following:
  - MRP Stream: MRP has been submitted to Supervisor and Second Reader, MRP has been assessed, completion paperwork has been submitted to SGSPA.
  - Thesis Stream: Thesis Defense has been completed, completion paperwork has been submitted to SGSPA, and final thesis has been uploaded to QSpace.

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## Sample Proposal for an MA Thesis or MRP

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Submitted by: Jane Doe, February 1, 2026

Supervisor: Faculty Member's Name

Working Title: "Metaphor and Narrative in Economics: The Cognitive Function and Epistemic Consequences of Rhetoric in Economic Theory"

### Overview

The notion that metaphor plays an important cognitive role in structuring our understanding of the world poses interesting and important questions both for philosophers of language and philosophers of science. In the former field, questions about how metaphors work and what they mean have been taken up and re-examined by philosophers such as Max Black, John Searle, and Donald Davidson. Philosophers and historians of science have in the meantime recognized the relevance of such debates to their own analyses of model-building and theory choice. In particular, the notion that scientific explanation hinges largely on metaphoric re-description has attracted a great deal of attention. Mary Hesse, Richard Boyd, Thomas Kuhn and others have argued that metaphors play not just an exegetical or heuristic role in science, but are instead constitutive of the theories they express.

How might such views come to bear on economic theory? Economics as a discipline has moved far beyond basic animating metaphors such as Adam Smith's infamous 'invisible hand'. Indeed, most practicing economists place much less importance on the verbal exposition of their models than on the mathematics itself, and the notion that the 'rhetoric' of economics might be worth serious study has had little impact on the core of the discipline. Nonetheless, a small number of economists and philosophers of economics (including Donald/Deirdre McCloskey, Arjo Klamer, and Philip Mirowski) have begun to make space for the discussion of such issues, and have drawn some attention to their significance for the practice and self-understanding of the discipline. McCloskey, for example, has argued that economists share with other scientists a reliance on the creation of metaphors and narratives, and that the explanatory power of their theories lies first and foremost in the rhetoric used to make economic phenomena intelligible - McCloskey's view of economic discourse has been highly influenced by a post-modernism of a Rortian flavour and shares some of its major epistemological (or post-epistemological) conclusions.

### Objectives

In my project, I intend to explore the cognitive function of metaphor and narrative in economic theory, and to assess the anti-realist or post-epistemological stance that economists following McCloskey's lead have adopted. My first task will be to argue that both metaphor and narrative make important contributions to the explanatory power of economic theories, and that metaphor in particular plays a crucial role in the development of economic models. To this end I will discuss an interactionist or structure-mapping theory of metaphor, and will examine two powerful economic metaphors (the Walrasian 'market' with its 'auctioneer', and the picture of

certain economic interactions as strategic 'games'). My second objective will be to clarify some epistemological implications of the above insights. If much of what economists take to be literal language or purely mathematical analysis is actually structured by pervasive constitutive metaphors, what are we to make of the project of justifying knowledge claims in economics? Does it make any sense to speak of an economic reality that theories can approach with varying degrees of accuracy?

I will argue that we ought to look before we leap to McCloskey's self-proclaimed post-modern conclusions. Perhaps ironically, McCloskey's critical stance can be argued to have largely conservative implications for the actual practice of economics. As Alexander Rosenberg points out, McCloskey arrives at a very laissez-faire approach to business as usual in the discipline. I will defend the claim that explicit evaluation of economic metaphors is both possible and desirable. Insofar as we have the resources to locate both strengths and flaws in certain models and forms of discourse, we ought not to be reticent to question the nature of business as usual in economics. For example, in his *More Heat than Light* Philip Mirowski provides an extended analysis of what he takes to be an inadequate constitutive metaphor, arguing that modern neo-classical economics borrows extensively from the language of 19th century energy physics, but is ultimately incoherent because the essential part of the analogy (the principle of conservation) fails. To give another example, recent feminist work has been directed at uncovering inconsistency and androcentrism within constitutive economic metaphors.

What it takes to uncover incoherent metaphors and crucial disanalogies is of course a complex question, and the aim of this project will not be to provide an answer, but rather to point to its importance, value and seriousness as a question.

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## The PhD Program

### Year 1

#### Course Requirements:

- 6 one-term courses (or equivalent); one of which *must* be PHIL 990 if not already taken
- Courses taken must fulfill a distribution requirement by taking at least one course falling under the heading of **Metaphysics and Epistemology**, and at least one course falling under the heading of **Value Theory**. Students whose background is particularly strong in one or the other of these two broad areas may, with the permission of the Graduate Coordinator, be allowed to substitute other courses for that part of their distribution requirement.
- Courses will be labelled with their relevant heading when sent out by the Grad Assistant during course selection.

- By special arrangement, appropriate graduate courses in other departments may be taken for credit in a philosophy graduate program, with a **limit of one** external course.
- In order to remain in good standing in the PhD program, a student must complete all of their courses within their first year (extensions may be granted on the basis of medical or similar reasons) and maintain an overall course average of 80%.

#### Additional Expectations:

Before the end of their first year (no later than the last week of August), the student is expected to have formed an agreement with a Supervisor, and to have formed a Dissertation Committee. The Dissertation Committee consists of the Supervisor and two other Faculty members with sufficient expertise in the student's area of research. This committee will assist the student throughout their program, and will form the basis of the final examination committee for the student's final defense.

## Year 2

The second year is devoted to identifying an area of research, focusing a dissertation topic and writing a dissertation proposal. During the second year of the program, the candidate's dissertation committee will assist the student in framing an area of research and mastering an appropriate reading list and series of area papers in preparation for the writing of the thesis.

Before the end of Summer term (August) of their second year students should be prepared to be orally examined by their committee on their dissertation proposal and research work preparatory for writing the dissertation. With permission of the Graduate Coordinator, the deadline for the dissertation proposal defense may be extended to halfway through Fall term (October 30) of the third year, but should be completed no later than this.

#### Notes About the Reading List and Area Papers:

- At the first meeting of a candidate's PhD committee (which should take place no later than September 30 of the second year), the student and the Committee members should agree upon a plan for the year. The aim of the PhD 2 work should be to help focus the dissertation topic by acquiring the necessary background. This will involve deciding on a reading list.
- Approval of the final reading list is at the discretion of the Committee. It should be acceptable to both the student and all members of the Committee. The graduate coordinator will be happy to consult, if that might prove helpful.
- One way of achieving this goal is to prepare reading lists on different aspects of the topic and write short papers (known as area papers) based on that list. The purpose of these area papers is to help master the relevant literature and provide a basis for discussion with the Committee about that literature. Reading lists should be discussed in advance with the committee to ensure that the relevant readings are covered and the list is suitably comprehensive.

- How many papers are written over the course of the year, and whether the abstracts and reading lists are to be prepared simultaneously or sequentially, is at the discretion of the Committee.
- It is strongly advised that students be writing continuously over the course of the year. This is the best way to master the material needed to prepare a proposal and begin writing on the chosen topic.
- A student should meet with his/her Committee at least once per semester in order to discuss their written work and progress. More frequent meetings is definitely desirable and strongly encouraged.

## Dissertation Proposal Defense

*For a more detailed breakdown of the process, please see “Process for Completing PhD Comprehensive Exams/Proposal Defense” on our website.*

The Dissertation Proposal Defense acts as the Comprehensive Exams requirement of a PhD for the Department of Philosophy. Ideally the defense *should* take place before August 31 of the 2<sup>nd</sup> year, and *must* take place no later than October 30<sup>th</sup> of the third year (with permission of the Graduate Coordinator). The purpose is to provide candidates with the opportunity to orally defend a detailed thesis proposal and to demonstrate that they possess the necessary focus and knowledge to begin writing the dissertation. In general, the oral examination enables an evaluation of a candidate's suitability for continuing in the PhD program. The examination should result in identification of any weaknesses and allow faculty members to judge the overall competence of the candidate. The members of the Examining Committee will be the members of the PhD Dissertation Committee. The examination will be chaired by the Graduate Coordinator or another member of BOGS.

The thesis proposal should be about 15-20 pages, though it can be shorter or longer, depending on what the committee deems acceptable. It should do the following:

- Discuss the relevant philosophical literature on the topic
- Provide an outline of the argument to be made in the dissertation
- Identify and defend the significance of the argument to be made
- Provide a timetable of research and writing for the various chapters, with a projected date of completion
- Provide a bibliography of primary and secondary source readings

Normally the thesis Supervisor(s) will approve the thesis proposal in writing (by signing the proposal or by e-mail) before it is circulated to the other members of the committee. However, if the Supervisor(s) and the student do not agree about the readiness of the proposal, the

candidate may inform the Graduate Coordinator in writing that he/she wishes to proceed with the oral exam.

The Supervisor will be responsible for determining a date for the proposal defense and for informing the Graduate Assistant. The graduate assistant will then complete the notification paperwork required by SGSPA. This paperwork needs to be submitted to SGSPA *prior to* the defense, so Supervisors should aim to notify the graduate assistant at least 5 working days before the defense.

Members of the Committee should provide the Examination Chair (once determined) with a written report on the strengths and weaknesses of the proposal before the start of the exam. They are encouraged to share their reports with the student at the conclusion of the exam.

The Committee will either pass the thesis proposal or ask the candidate to resubmit with specified revisions. A decision to pass must be unanimous and the Committee must specify in writing the nature of the revisions, if required. If resubmission is required, the supervisor will notify the Graduate Coordinator and Graduate Assistant. The candidate must resubmit within three months.

Members of the Examination Committee will submit reports on the revised proposal to the Graduate Coordinator before the second oral examination. The Examination Committee will pass or fail the revised proposal by simple majority. Failure of the second examination or the passage of three months without resubmission requires withdrawal from the program. Students wishing to appeal the decision of the Committee after failure of the second exam may consult the SGSPA Calendar for details of the appeal process.

Candidates who fail to defend their thesis proposal by October 30th of the third year will be considered to have failed. Should exceptional circumstances arise that merit an extension of the deadline, the candidate can request an extension stating reasons for the requested extension. The Committee will decide by majority vote whether to grant the request.

## Years 3 & 4

After the second year of background research, and with a formal proposal approved, PhD students should be well equipped to embark on the research and writing of the doctoral thesis. Students should keep in regular contact with their Supervisor, and update other members of their Dissertation Committee about the progress of their doctoral research as they progress.

All PhD students from Year 2 onward will be expected to complete an **annual report** via the [SGSPA website](#) on their progress in the graduate program during the preceding academic year.

Students whose progress is unsatisfactory will be asked to meet with a member or members of BOGS to discuss any difficulties and plans to move forward. A written report of the meeting will be compiled and shown to the student, who can comment on it before it is placed in the student's file. Students who do not show satisfactory progress may be asked to withdraw from the program.

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## The Doctoral Dissertation

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*For a more detailed breakdown of the process, please see “Process for Completing a PhD Dissertation Defense” on our website.*

Writing a doctoral dissertation can seem a daunting task, but students can avail themselves of a number of resources at Queen's to help. SGSPA runs regular dissertation 'boot camps' as well as a wonderful 'Dissertation by the Lake' program in late summer which enables students to spend a few days away from the city to focus on their research. The '3-minute thesis competition' has also been a great catalyst for motivating students. See the [Workshop](#) page of their website for listings.

Once the thesis is completed, the Supervisor is responsible for determining an internal-external examiner (Queen's Faculty member outside of the Department of Philosophy) and an external examiner (Faculty member from outside of Queen's), for proposing a time for the oral exam, and for notifying the graduate assistant of all details pertaining to the Final Dissertation Defense. The graduate assistant and graduate coordinator can assist in finding a Chair for the exam.

The PhD dissertation must be submitted to all examiners **at least five full weeks before the oral defense**. Students should submit an electronic copy to their committee members and to the graduate assistant. Students need to ask their examiners if they require a hard copy of the dissertation and, if so, should reach out to the graduate assistant for help.

On the same time schedule, the graduate assistant must submit notification of the upcoming exam to SGSPA **no later than 25 working days (five full weeks) before the oral defense**. Students and Supervisors must ensure that the graduate assistant has the necessary information in time to submit this paperwork.

The defense will be assessed as Passed, Passed with Major Revisions, Referred, or Failed. Please see “Outcome Categories of an Oral Thesis Examination” on [our website](#) for more detailed explanations and next steps for each category.

If the defense is passed, the Chair of the examination will notify SGSPA. The student will then need to submit their final thesis to QSpace, making sure to follow the formatting requirements laid out on the [SGSPA website](#).

The Graduate School requires that “a thesis be expressed in a satisfactory form consistent with the discipline concerned and displays a scholarly approach to the subject and a thorough knowledge of it. A critical review of previous work related to the subject should be given.” In addition, the doctoral thesis 'must be original and be of such value as to merit publication' (section 8.6, 'Thesis, General Remarks,' from the Graduate Studies Calendar).

## Academic Integrity

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All students are advised to familiarize themselves with Queen's University's regulations on Academic Integrity, available in the [Graduate Calendar](#).

## Leaves of Absence

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Without prejudice to their academic standing, graduate students may apply for a leave of absence from their studies for one term (4 months) and up to a maximum of three terms (12 months) for a limited number of reasons. You can find more details about Leaves of Absence in the [Graduate Calendar](#).

Students are required to send a request for an official leave of absence in writing to the [Director, Admissions and Students Services, School of Graduate Studies](#), and must provide documentation relevant to the leave requested in order to have it granted. If you have questions about this process, please reach out to the Graduate Assistant. But please note that official leaves cannot be granted by the Department. While the graduate assistant can help to answer questions, any application for a leave of absence *must* be submitted to SGSPA.

If an official leave is granted, your studies will pause for the duration of the leave. Tuition will not be charged, nor will you be considered to be active in your program while you are on leave. Functionally, what this means is that if you were granted a year-long leave at the beginning of the second year of a PhD, when you re-start your studies the following year, you would be considered a Year 2 PhD student rather than a Year 3 student since it is assumed you are not completing any program work during the leave.

## Professional Development

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The Department's Placement Officer for 2026-27 is Catherine Stinson.

SGSPA runs an array of [workshops](#) on both academic and non-academic career paths. Students are strongly encouraged to avail themselves of these opportunities.

Queen's Career Services also offers [workshops](#) throughout the year on a variety of topics.

SGSPA offers courses of potential interest to all graduate students. In particular, [SGS 902\\*](#) is designed to assist senior Ph.D. students with professional development, especially teaching.

## Awards in Philosophy

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### A.R.C. Duncan Award for Excellence in Teaching

The A.R.C. Duncan Award for Excellence in Tutoring was established in honour of a former head of this department and one of the country's most distinguished teachers of philosophy. It is awarded annually to a teaching assistant whose contribution has been particularly outstanding. The Board of Graduate Studies receives nominations from faculty at the end of every academic year.

### Dr. H. Martyn Estall Award in Philosophy

The Dr. H. Martyn Estall Graduate Award in Philosophy was established to assist graduate students in the department of Philosophy to attend a major conference. Preference will be given to students who wish to present a paper at the annual meeting of the Canadian Philosophical Association (Usually held in June of each year). If there are no applications for attendance of the Canadian Philosophical Association meeting, applications for other important conferences will be considered. Applications must be made in writing to the Graduate Coordinator, and copied to the Graduate Assistant. You can find the application form on [our website](#).

### Travel Awards

The Graduate School makes some funds available for graduate students to travel to and present work at conferences, symposia, and other academic occasions. You must submit a request for funding to the Graduate Coordinator (via the Graduate Assistant) prior to the conference. You can find the application form on [our website](#).

Where students expect to incur expenses significantly beyond \$300 (e.g. because they plan to travel to a conference in Europe, or because they wish to attend more than one conference), they should apply directly to the Head of Department (cc-ing the Graduate Coordinator) in case funds are available to provide additional support.

### The C.G. Prado Thesis Prize

This prize was established by faculty and friends in honour of Professor Emeritus Carlos G. Prado. During his distinguished career at Queen's, Prof. Prado published more than a dozen books and supervised over thirty Ph.D. and M.A. theses. Prof. Prado continues to inspire many students. The prize will provide an annual award to a graduate student in the Department of Philosophy who submits an outstanding doctoral thesis. To be eligible, a Doctoral student's thesis must be submitted within 7 years of the candidate's first registration in the Ph.D. program in the Department of Philosophy (with accommodation being made for official leaves, etc.). The Graduate Assistant will put out a call for nominations in October of every year. Supervisors should submit their nominations to the graduate assistant for assessment by BOGS.

## Graduate Student Initiative Fund

The Department has a fund, established in memory of Michael Yang, to support initiatives by its graduate students, including holding of workshops, hosting visiting speakers, and so on. Potential applicants should discuss their proposed application with the Graduate Coordinator before making a formal written submission including a detailed budget. Applications will be evaluated by BOGS which will make a recommendation to the Head of Department. Applications can be made at any time.

## Fellowships

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Continuing students should keep in touch with the Graduate Coordinator and Graduate Assistant regarding external and internal fellowship/award applications and deadlines. To qualify for continuing Queen's funding awards, candidates must show that they have applied for external awards as well.

As a general rule, PhD-level SSHRC applications are typically due in early October, and OGS applications are typically due in early March.

## Miscellaneous

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A guide to finding philosophy research tools in Douglas and Stauffer Libraries may be had from the library's [reference department](#).

Dates and deadlines of importance to graduate students are listed in the [Graduate Calendar](#).

Students experiencing financial problems should let the Graduate Coordinator know. Although the department has very limited funds available for additional support for graduate students, the Graduate Coordinator may be aware of possible opportunities for research assistantships, etc.

Each graduate student has a mail tray located in Room 311. Students are requested to check regularly for mail, especially for TA purposes.

The department endeavours to provide shared office space for its graduate students in Watson Hall – permanent office space is available for PhD students, while some temporary first-come, first-served office space is available to MA students. If you have questions about office space, please reach out to the Graduate Assistant. Students are responsible for keeping offices in good order. Any concerns about the condition of offices, or issues about security, should be brought immediately to the Graduate Assistant. If students need to book another room for an academic purpose, they may request this through the Graduate Assistant.