

**Department of Philosophy
University of Nevada, Reno
Graduate Program Handbook**

This handbook provides guidance to graduate students and faculty as students advance through the M.A. program. It provides the necessary information for graduate students to understand the requirements, expectations, and opportunities associated with the master’s degree program and the Graduate School. This handbook replicates information in the most current University General Course Catalog, which can be found at <http://catalog.unr.edu>

Students are responsible for ensuring that they meet the requirements for the M.A. degree as set forth in this handbook and the General Course Catalog, that the completion of each formal requirement is recorded properly, and that their Graduate School files are complete and up-to-date. Faculty members, however, are willing to assist whenever a graduate student feels there is some uncertainty or problem.

This handbook has two objectives. First, to articulate the department’s expectations of graduate students, which in the judgment of the faculty assure high standards of philosophical training. Second, to assure fairness in the treatment of graduate students by applying common and unambiguous standards to all.

Table of Contents

1. Program Description	2
2. Degree Requirements	2
3. 700-level Courses.....	3
4. Transfer Credits and Courses Taken as a Grad Special	4
5. Timeline for Degree Completion	4
6. Advisory-Examining Committee and Program of Study.....	5
7. Master’s Thesis	6
8. Professional Paper.....	7
9. Graduation Policies and Deadlines	8
10. Graduate Assistantships, Leonard Scholarships, and Additional Scholarships	8
11. Health Insurance	10
12. Good Standing, Leave of Absence, and Reinstatement	10
13. Graduate Student Association.....	11
14. Departmental Citizenship.....	11
15. Pursuing a Ph.D. in Philosophy	11

1. Program Description

The M.A. program in Philosophy at the University of Nevada, Reno is designed for students who intend to apply to Ph.D. programs in philosophy, who intend to teach philosophy at the community-college level, who seek a philosophy degree for the grounding it provides for other areas of study (e.g., law, science, practical ethics, theology), or who wish to acquire a deeper understanding of philosophical traditions and contemporary developments.

Students who complete the M.A. program in Philosophy will become more knowledgeable about ongoing discussions in the discipline as well as historical contexts for these discussions. Students will develop their critical and creative intellectual capacities through reading, writing, and discussion. They will be able to interpret philosophical texts and write their own philosophical texts.

The Graduate Program Director is Dr. Benjamin Young, who can be reached at benjaminyoung@unr.edu The Administrative Assistant for the Department of Philosophy is Eric Ríos, who can be reached at erios@unr.edu

2. Degree Requirements

The Department of Philosophy offers two M.A. degrees: a general M.A. in Philosophy and a M.A. in Philosophy with a specialization in Ethics, Law, and Politics. All students, regardless of their degree track and plan within the degree program, must complete a minimum of 18 credits in 700-level courses. Please see section 3 of this handbook for information about 700-level courses.

General M.A. in Philosophy:

Students who pursue the general M.A. in philosophy have two options for their studies:

Plan A: Thesis required

30 credits of graduate-level courses are required to graduate
6 of these credits must be PHIL 797 (Thesis)

Plan B: Thesis not required

33 credits of graduate-level courses are required to graduate
Students must have a passing grade in 1-3 credits of PHIL 796 (Professional Paper)
Please note that PHIL 796 does not count towards the 33 credits required for the degree

M.A. in Philosophy with a specialization in Ethics, Law, and Politics:

All students who pursue this M.A. degree must take the following four courses:

PHIL 650 (Ethical Theory)
PHIL 653 (Topics in Philosophy of Law)
PHIL 654 (Global Ethics and Justice)
PHIL 657 (Political Philosophy)

Students who pursue the M.A. in philosophy with a specialization in Ethics, Law, and Politics have two options for their studies:

Plan A: Thesis required

30 credits of graduate-level courses are required to graduate
6 of these credits must be PHIL 797 (Thesis)

Plan B: Thesis not required

33 credits of graduate-level courses are required to graduate
Students must have a passing grade in 1-3 credits of PHIL 796 (Professional Paper)
Please note that PHIL 796 does not count towards the 33 credits required for the degree

Graduate students who are pursuing the Ethics, Law, and Politics specialization may take up to six (6) credits outside of the Department of Philosophy in areas relevant to ethics, law, and politics. Departmental approval from the Graduate Program Coordinator is required for all non-philosophy credits that are to be counted toward the degree.

GPA Requirements:

All graduate students, whether they are pursuing the general M.A. in Philosophy or the M.A. in Philosophy with a specialization in Ethics, Law, and Politics, must maintain a cumulative graduate GPA of 3.0 to remain in “good standing.” If their GPA drops below 3.0 they are either placed on probation or dismissed. Undergraduate courses will not count towards graduate GPA.

Students whose cumulative graduate GPA is .1 to .6 points below that needed for a 3.0 GPA are put on probation. Students are placed on academic probation for one semester. If they fail to raise their cumulative GPA to 3.0 by the end of one semester, they are dismissed from their graduate program. Thesis, dissertation, S/U graded credits, and transfer credits have no impact on a student’s GPA.

Students whose cumulative graduate GPA is .7 or more grade points below that needed for a 3.0 GPA are dismissed. Dismissed students are no longer in a graduate program but may take graduate-level courses as a Grad Special. Students wishing to complete their degree must obtain approval to take graduate-level courses, raise their graduate GPA to at least 3.0 and then re-apply to a graduate program. Any courses taken to raise their GPA will be included in the graduate special and transfer credit limitation, which is nine (9) credits for master’s degrees.

3. 700-level Courses

All graduate students in the Department of Philosophy must complete a minimum of 18 credits in 700-level courses. Three of the department’s 700-level courses (PHIL 711, PHIL 712, and PHIL 713) are cross-listed with our 400/600 level courses. Graduate students choose whether they wish to take a course at the 600-level or the 700-level. Consider three examples: PHIL 615 (Kant) can be taken as PHIL 711 (Seminar in Major Figures in the History of Philosophy). PHIL 635 (Philosophy of Mind) can be taken as PHIL 712 (Seminar in Major Movements in the History of Philosophy). PHIL 638 (Problems in the History and Philosophy of Science) can be taken as PHIL 713 (Seminar in Philosophical Problems).

Graduate students should communicate their desire to take a course at the 700-level to the professor before registering for the course. Faculty expect graduate students who take a course at the 700-level to produce higher-quality work than graduate students who take a course at the 600-level. Faculty members have discretion to determine at the beginning of the semester the requirements for what higher-quality work entails in that course.

Graduate students need permission from the Department of Philosophy's administrative assistant to enroll in 700-level courses. Graduate students cannot enroll themselves in 700-level courses through <http://my.nevada.unr.edu>. After the graduate student has communicated with the professor, the student should e-mail the Philosophy Department's administrative assistant and ask to be enrolled in a specific 700-level course.

4. Transfer Credits and Courses Taken as a Grad Special

Students who wish to transfer graduate-level credits from another institution should complete the Graduate Credit Transfer Evaluation Request form. This form is available at <http://www.unr.edu/Documents/graduate-school/GraduateCreditTransferEvaluationRequest.pdf>

Transfer credits applied to a master's program must comply with the time limitation on master's work (6 years). Thus, if a graduate student took a course five years prior to admission to the M.A. degree program at the University of Nevada, Reno, then they would have to complete the degree within one year for the transfer course to apply to the M.A. degree.

Students who have not applied for admission into a specific graduate degree program at the University of Nevada, Reno are permitted to enroll in graduate-level courses as a Grad Special. Although there is no limit to the number of credits that may be earned as a Grad Special, a maximum of 9 credits may be applied toward a program of study. If a student who has been accepted in the M.A. in Philosophy degree program has completed non-philosophy credits as a Grad Special, the student must request and receive approval from the Graduate Program Coordinator for these credits to count towards the student's degree.

5. Timeline for Degree Completion

All course work for master's degrees must be completed within six (6) years preceding the awarding of the degree. To graduate in two (2) academic years, a student must enroll in nine credits each semester for three semesters. To graduate in three (3) academic years, a student must enroll in six credits each semester for five semesters. The Department of Philosophy encourages students to enroll in at least six (6) credits a semester.

M.A. students must submit a Declaration of Advisor/Major Advisor/Committee Chair form by the end of their second semester in the degree program.

M.A. students must submit a Program of Study form by the end of their third semester in the degree program.

At the beginning of the semester in which the student intends to graduate, the graduate student should submit the Graduate Application form. This form can be found at <http://www.unr.edu/grad/forms-and-deadlines/graduation-application>

Near the end of the semester in which the student intends to graduate, the graduate student should submit the Notice of Completion form. This form can be found at <http://www.unr.edu/Documents/graduate-school/notice-of-completion-master-degree.pdf>

Graduate students should complete the Exit Survey immediately before or after they graduate. This survey can be found at <http://www.unr.edu/grad/forms/exit-survey>

All forms associated with the Graduate School can be located at <http://www.unr.edu/grad/forms>

6. Advisory-Examining Committee and Program of Study

When students are admitted into the M.A. degree program, they should look to the Graduate Program Coordinator for advice on course selection during their first semester. Graduate students should gain familiarity with the other members of the faculty over the course of their first and second semesters. By the end of a graduate student's second semester, the student should choose an advisor and complete and submit the Declaration of Advisor/Major Advisor/Committee Chair form. The most important factors that a student should look for in a potential faculty advisor are shared philosophical research interests and complementary working styles. The Declaration of Advisor/Major Advisor/Committee Chair form is the initial agreement between a student and the faculty member who will serve as their advisor and their advisory-examining committee chair. All graduate students must choose an advisor, regardless of whether they are pursuing the thesis option or the professional paper option. This form can be found at <http://www.unr.edu/Documents/graduate-school/Declaration%20of%20Advisor%20rev2.pdf>

By the end of a graduate student's third semester in the M.A. degree program, the student should complete and submit the Program of Study form. The Program of Study form is an official agreement between the student and the Department of Philosophy. Every student must submit this form for graduation review. The form lists all courses required for degree completion, establishes the advisory committee with the Graduate School, and the form is evaluated in accordance with department and university policies.

All graduate students must have at least three advisory committee members. The student's advisor serves as the committee chair. All advisory committee members must be Graduate Faculty members. Graduate Faculty are a specific subset of all university faculty. Students can check which faculty members are Graduate Faculty at <http://www.unr.edu/grad/graduate-faculty>. At least one member of the student's advisory committee must be from a department or program that is outside of the Department of Philosophy. This faculty member serves as the Graduate School Representative. Students who do not know a faculty member from outside the Department of Philosophy to ask to serve in this role should consult the Graduate Program Coordinator for advice. Formal approval of all student advisory committees is made by the Dean of the Graduate School.

7. Master's Thesis

The master's thesis is an opportunity for a graduate student to conduct philosophical research and to develop an original philosophical argument. Graduate students who intend to complete the thesis option should identify their research interests and ask a faculty member who shares their research interests to serve as their advisor and advisory-examining committee chair by the end of their second semester in the degree program. This information should be recorded on the student's Declaration of Advisor/Major Advisor/Committee Chair form.

Students who are pursuing the thesis option must enroll in PHIL 797 (Thesis) for at least 6 credits over the course of their last two semesters in the degree program. The student should work closely with the student's advisor to set deadlines for receiving draft material. Soon after beginning work on the thesis, the student should write a brief prospectus in which the student describes the main argument that he or she will develop in the thesis. The prospectus must include references to relevant philosophical scholarship. The master's thesis should consist of approximately three chapters and be no fewer than 50 double-spaced pages in length.

Master's Thesis Deadlines:

The student should send a complete draft of the master's thesis to the student's thesis advisor no later than eight (8) weeks before the student intends to graduate. The faculty member will read the draft and offer a last round of suggestions for improvement within two (2) weeks. While the student waits to receive comments on the draft, the student and his or her advisor should work with all members of the advisory-examining committee to determine a time for the thesis defense.

The student should revise the thesis in light of their advisor's comments and send a final pre-defense draft of the thesis to all members of the student's advisory-examining committee no later than five (5) weeks before the student intends to graduate. The student should consult the Graduate School requirements for formatting the thesis and filing the thesis at <http://www.unr.edu/grad/forms/thesis-filing-guidelines>

The student should defend the thesis at least two (2) weeks before the student intends to graduate. The student should submit the thesis, with revisions if the advisory-examining committee deems it necessary, by the deadline set by the Graduate School. The student should include the Final Review Approval form with the submission. This form is located at <http://www.unr.edu/Documents/graduate-school/thesis-final-review-approval-form.pdf>

Master's Thesis Defense:

The master's thesis defense includes two components. First, the graduate student presents the main argument of the thesis for approximately 15 minutes. Second, the student's advisory-examining committee will ask questions of the student about the thesis, and the student will respond. This Q&A will last approximately 60 to 75 minutes. Attendance at the student's presentation and the Q&A is open to anyone from the university community, but only members of the committee may ask questions of the candidate.

The advisory-examining committee will determine when enough questions have been asked and responses have been given. At this time, the thesis committee will ask the student to leave the room. The advisory-examining committee members will discuss the student's written work and performance during the Q&A. They will determine whether the student has passed the thesis defense. They will also determine whether any revisions to the thesis will be required.

The student will be asked to reenter the room and the committee's decision will be shared. If thesis revisions are required, the revised draft must be sent to the advisor before the student submits the thesis to the Graduate School.

Graduate students who wish to pursue doctoral study in philosophy are highly encouraged to present their M.A. thesis research at a department colloquium. Interested graduate students should work with their advisor to schedule such an event during the semester that they defend the M.A. thesis.

8. Professional Paper

Graduate students who choose the non-thesis option for their M.A. degree program must write a professional paper and receive the grade of Satisfactory in PHIL 796 (Professional Paper). A professional paper is an approximately 3,000-word paper of a level of quality appropriate to delivery at a professional philosophical conference. The student will present the professional paper at a departmental colloquium. The student will be evaluated on both the written text of the paper and oral presentation, including their handling of questions during the discussion period.

A graduate student must consult with faculty members regarding possible topics for their professional paper in advance of the semester in which they intend to complete it. The student must submit a brief prospectus of the paper to a faculty member whose area of research and teaching aligns with the paper topic. This faculty member serves as the instructor of record. The prospectus must include references to relevant philosophical scholarship. If the faculty member approves the prospectus, the student enrolls in PHIL 796 for the next semester for 1-3 credits.

Professional Paper Deadlines:

The student must send a first draft to the faculty member who approved the prospectus by September 15 or February 15. The faculty advisor will provide the graduate student with constructive criticism, and the student and the faculty advisor will determine which faculty member will read the student's revised second draft.

The student must revise the draft and send it to the second faculty member by October 1 or March 1. This faculty member will provide the student with constructive criticism.

The student must revise the document and submit the final draft of the professional paper to the Department Chair by November 1 or April 1. The Department Chair must approve the final draft before the student's colloquium can be scheduled for November or April.

The student must submit by the date of the colloquium the prospectus and the first, second, and final drafts of the professional paper to the faculty member who approved the prospectus.

Professional Paper Defense:

The graduate student will present the professional paper at a department colloquium. The student will read or talk through the paper in approximately 20-30 minutes, and then answer questions from faculty members and other members of the audience, including fellow graduate students.

A departmental committee will be charged with assessing the professional quality of the paper. Each faculty member who serves on this committee will attend the colloquium and assess the student's performance with a letter grade. The grades will be totaled and the student must receive an average of a B- in order to pass the course with the grade of Satisfactory. The committee will take into account the responsiveness of the student to feedback solicited in the course of the production of the paper, and any relevant collateral evidence (e.g., multiple drafts). The faculty advisor is responsible for recording the student's grade of Satisfactory or Unsatisfactory.

9. Graduation Policies and Deadlines

Graduate students should be familiar with the policies and deadlines for graduation, which can be located at <http://www.unr.edu/grad/graduation-and-deadlines>. Every graduate student must purchase a Graduation Application by the designated deadline: March 1 for May graduation, June 1 for August graduation, October 1 for December graduation. Students must submit this application online at <http://my.nevada.unr.edu>

Each graduate student must submit a Notice of Completion form to graduate after all requirements have been met. This form is located at <http://www.unr.edu/Documents/graduate-school/notice-of-completion-master-degree.pdf>

Graduate students who have written and defended a thesis should also submit a thesis Final Review Approval form. This form is located at <http://www.unr.edu/Documents/graduate-school/thesis-final-review-approval-form.pdf>

10. Graduate Assistantships, Leonard Scholarships, and Additional Scholarships

The Department of Philosophy has two full-time teaching assistant positions. In fall 2016, the salary for the teaching assistant positions is \$17,000 a year, plus a grant-in-aid that reduces tuition and fees. The teaching load for teaching assistants is two courses per academic year or their equivalent. Two discussion sections in Core Humanities are equivalent to one course.

If the recipients of the teaching assistant positions make normal progress toward the M.A. degree and perform adequately the duties of the assistantship, the assistantships will be renewed for a second year. A two-year incumbent may apply for a third year of support, but that applicant will compete with other students seeking the position.

All graduate students holding a teaching or research assistantship are considered Nevada residents for tuition purposes. Non-resident tuition is only waived for the duration of the assistantship. State-funded assistantships may be held for a maximum of three (3) years for master's degree students.

Applying for a Graduate Assistantship:

An announcement of available graduate assistant positions for the upcoming academic year in the Department of Philosophy is made by the Graduate Program Coordinator in early April. Applicants are expected to be students in the Philosophy M.A. program. Preference will be given to applicants with an undergraduate major or minor in philosophy. Interested students must submit a letter of application explaining why they believe they would be qualified for the position. Students who are enrolled already in the M.A. program should include the names of three (3) faculty members in the Department of Philosophy as references. The faculty will use the application letters of reference for applicants who have been accepted recently into the M.A. program. The deadline for the receipt of applications is typically in late April. Applicants should e-mail their letter of application to the Graduate Program Coordinator or to the Administrative Assistant.

To be eligible for an assistantship, students must be admitted to the M.A. degree program in Philosophy and be in good academic standing. The student must have an overall GPA of at least 3.0 and must be continuously enrolled in at least six (6) graduate level credits throughout the duration of the assistantship. For more information about graduate assistantships, please consult <http://www.unr.edu/grad/funding/graduate-assistantships>

University-wide policies and rules for graduate assistantships can be found in this handbook at http://www.unr.edu/Documents/administration-finance/hr/hr-graduate/GA_handbook.pdf

Guy L. Leonard Memorial Scholarship in Philosophy:

Each academic year, the Department of Philosophy awards four scholarships of \$2,500 each to two top male and two top female students. The department awards the Leonard Memorial Scholarships through the generosity of the Leonard family, whose gifts to the department are in memory of their son, Guy Leonard. Guy graduated from the University of Nevada, Reno with a B.A. in Philosophy in 1977. He was hit and killed by a drunk driver that same year. The faculty members meet in early May to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of eligible candidates and reach a decision by voting. Historically, the faculty award Leonard Memorial Scholarships to two undergraduate students and to two graduate students.

Students must have a minimum grade point average of 3.0 to be considered for this scholarship and must maintain at least a 3.0 GPA during the year that they receive the scholarship. To be eligible to receive this scholarship, undergraduate students must enroll in a minimum of 12 credits at the University of Nevada, Reno for each semester that they receive the scholarship. Graduate students must enroll in a minimum of 9 credits during each semester that they receive the scholarship. If the recipient graduate student is teaching during one of the semesters of the award, only 6 credit hours are required for enrollment during the semester(s) they are teaching.

Additional Scholarship Opportunities:

In late October, the university makes available the Graduate and Undergraduate Scholarship Application in MyNEVADA. Graduate students should go to <http://my.nevada.unr.edu> and click on "Student Center" and then "Supplemental Forms." Graduate students who are not graduating that academic year should complete the application for the opportunity to be awarded funds for the following academic year. The priority application deadline is February 1.

Graduate students should also submit a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), because many of the university's merit scholarships require demonstrated financial need. The FAFSA can be accessed at <https://fafsa.ed.gov/>

11. Health Insurance

All domestic degree seeking graduate students, who are enrolled in six (6) or more credits in a semester will be automatically enrolled and billed for the University sponsored health insurance for each term they are eligible. If a student has other comparable coverage and would like to waive out of the student health insurance, it is the student's responsibility to complete the University online waiver form prior to the deadline. If approved, a health insurance waiver is good for the current academic year only. A new waiver must be submitted each academic year. All international graduate students are required to carry student health insurance, and the cost will be automatically added to your student account. Any international graduate students with insurance questions must contact the Office of International Students and Scholars (OISS) directly. For additional information, please consult <http://www.unr.edu/grad/health-insurance>

12. Good Standing, Leave of Absence, and Reinstatement

Good Standing:

To maintain in "good standing," graduate students are required to enroll in a minimum of three (3) graduate credits offered by the Department of Philosophy each fall and spring semester until they graduate. Graduate students must maintain a cumulative graduate GPA of 3.0 to remain in good standing. International students are required to enroll in six (6) graduate credits each fall and spring semester. All students holding graduate assistantships are required to enroll in a minimum of six (6) graduate credits each semester they hold the assistantship.

Leave of Absence:

Students in good standing may request a leave of absence by completing a leave of absence form available on the Graduate School website during which time they are not required to maintain continuous registration. Usually, a leave of absence is approved for one semester. The leave of absence request may be extended by the student filing an additional leave of absence form. Students applying for a leave of absence should not have any "incomplete" grades which could be changed to "F" and have a detrimental impact on their cumulative GPA. Requests for leave of absences must be received by the Graduate School no later than the last day of enrollment for the semester the leave is to begin.

Reinstatement:

When a student has been absent for one semester or more without an approved leave of absence, he or she may request reinstatement via the Reinstatement form available on the Graduate School website. This form allows the program the option to recommend the student be re-admitted to their graduate program based on their previous admission or require the student to re-apply for admission which would require students to submit a new application for admission and pay the application fee. The Notice of Reinstatement to Graduate Standing must be received by the Graduate School no later than the last day of enrollment for the semester the reinstatement is to begin.

13. Graduate Student Association

The Graduate Student Association (GSA) represents all graduate students and promotes the welfare and interests of the graduate students at the University of Nevada, Reno. The GSA works closely with appropriate university administrative offices, including the Graduate School and Student Services and reports to the President of the University. Graduate Students who are presenting their research at a conference can apply to the GSA Travel Awards program. Additional information about the GSA can be found at <http://www.unr.edu/gsa>

14. Departmental Citizenship

At the graduate level, students (whatever their future plans) are in the process of becoming junior members of an academic profession, and they are expected not only to demonstrate a serious commitment to their field of study but also to be engaged citizens of their department. When visiting speakers give colloquium talks, for instance, it is expected that graduate students will make conscientious efforts to attend these events. Or in courses where both undergraduate and graduate students are registered, or in which separate sessions for graduate students are made available, it is similarly expected that graduate students will take some responsibility for the shaping of discussions or presentations. The contributions of graduate students to the intellectual life of the department are not merely welcome but vital. Students who are accepted into the Master's program should understand and appreciate the role their contributions play.

15. Pursuing a Ph.D. in Philosophy

Graduate students in the M.A. degree program at the University of Nevada, Reno who are considering pursuing a Ph.D. in philosophy are encouraged to consult with faculty members about their goals. Letters of recommendation are an important aspect of applications to Ph.D. programs. Graduate students who wish to continue the study of philosophy after graduating from UNR should develop strong academic and professional relationships with at least three members of the faculty while completing M.A. degree requirements. Having successfully completed Ph.D. programs themselves, members of the faculty can also offer perspective and advice on the struggles and joys of doctoral study in philosophy.

The American Philosophical Association also offers many resources to students who are considering the Ph.D. For example, the Guide to Graduate Programs in Philosophy compiles data on both doctoral and master's degree programs in philosophy at institutions throughout the US and Canada, offering prospective students a rich resource on post-graduate education and employment in philosophy. This guide can be found at <http://gradguide.apaonline.org/>