

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

OFFICE OF THE VICE-PRESIDENT, ACADEMIC

MEMORANDUM

To: Senate

From: J. M. Munro, Chair
Senate Committee on Academic Planning

Subject: Department of Philosophy

Date: April 10, 1995

Action undertaken by the Senate Graduate Studies Committee and the Senate Committee on Academic Planning, gives rise to the following motion:

Motion:

"that Senate approve and recommend approval to the Board of Governors as set forth in S.95 - 32 , the proposed

- i) changes to the requirements for the M.A. and Ph.D. programs
- ii) change in credit hours from 3 to 5 for PHIL 805, 815, 825, 845, 855."



CHANGES IN REQUIREMENTS FOR Ph.D. PROGRAM

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

FROM: *Current Calendar Entry*

Degree Requirements

Courses

Students in the PhD program are normally required to complete twelve graduate courses, six in the first year of registration in the program, and six in the second. Students admitted after one year in the MA program are normally required to complete at least eight graduate courses beyond those completed in the MA program.

Students entering the PhD program after completing the requirements of an MA degree may have the course requirements reduced, but in no case by more than four courses. Each student's committee will recommend, according to the student's background and the requirements appropriate to the field of research, the kind and number of courses to be taken by the students.

Students entering directly from the Bachelors degree must, during the first year of graduate study, complete six courses with a CGPA of at least 3.33.

Examinations

Students are required to pass a comprehensive examination, normally by the end of the first semester of the third year of registration in the program. Upon successful completion of the comprehensive examination and an approved thesis proposal, a student is admitted to candidacy for the PhD degree.

Language Requirements

Students are required to demonstrate such competence in foreign languages as the Graduate Studies Committee deems essential to the successful completion of their proposed research.

Formal Logic Requirement

Students are required to either have, or acquire, competence in formal logic, at a minimum at the level of PHIL 210, higher when relevant to their research.

Thesis Proposal and Seminar

Before the end of the first semester of the third year in the program, a candidate for the PhD degree is required to submit a thesis proposal for approval of an examining committee consisting of the student's supervisory committee and one further member of the combined graduate department. The proposal must give evidence that the student is acquainted with the literature in the area of the proposed research and must represent a well defined program of investigation.

Before the end of the second semester of the third year of the program, the candidate is required to make a presentation to a colloquium of faculty and graduate students of the combined department on the subject of the proposed research.

Thesis

Students in the PhD program are required to write and defend a thesis embodying original philosophical research.

TO:

Degree Requirements**Courses**

Students in the PhD program are normally required to take 12 courses, six in the first year of registration in the program, and six in the second. Two of the courses may, with permission of the Graduate Studies Committee, be 300 or 400 level undergraduate courses, the rest must be graduate ones. Students admitted after one year in the MA program are normally required to complete at least eight graduate courses beyond those completed in the MA program.

Students entering the PhD program after completing the requirements of an MA degree may have the course requirements reduced, but in no case by more than four courses. Each student's committee will recommend, according to the student's background and the requirements appropriate to the field of research, the kind and number of courses to be taken by the students.

Students entering directly from the Bachelors degree must, during the first year of graduate study, complete six courses with a CGPA of at least 3.33.

Examinations

Students are required to pass a comprehensive examination, normally by the end of the first semester of the third year of registration in the program. Upon successful completion of the comprehensive examination and an approved thesis proposal, a student is admitted to candidacy for the PhD degree.

Language Requirements

Students are required to demonstrate such competence in foreign languages as the Graduate Studies Committee deems essential to the successful completion of their proposed research.

Formal Logic Requirement

In addition to other course requirements, students are required to either have or acquire competence in formal logic at the level of PHIL 214, or higher when considered relevant to their research.

Thesis Proposal and Seminar

Before the end of the first semester of the third year in the program, a candidate for the PhD degree is required to submit a thesis proposal for approval of an examining committee consisting of the student's supervisory committee and one further member of the combined graduate department. The proposal must give evidence that the student is acquainted with the literature in the area of the proposed research and must represent a well defined program of investigation.

Before the end of the second semester of the third year of the program, the candidate is required to make a presentation to a colloquium of faculty and graduate students of the combined department on the subject of the proposed research.

Thesis

Students in the PhD program are required to write and defend a thesis embodying original philosophical research.

RATIONALE:

Changes to the PhD Programme

1. Raise the formal logic requirement

Competence at PHIL 214 instead of PHIL 210 will be required.

Rationale:

PHIL 210 is an elementary formal logic course required of all of our undergraduate majors. It does not represent a mastery of formal techniques expected of a student with a graduate degree. PHIL 214 will give our graduates the basic competence expected in the field.

2. Allow two undergraduate courses towards satisfying requirements

Two of the required courses can be 300 or 400 level undergraduate courses, with permission of the Graduate Studies Committee.

Rationale:

A major function of the course requirements in graduate programs is to round out the student's general education in the field. All students have some gaps in their education and could profit from advanced undergraduate courses in areas outside their specialization. Increasing the course requirements and allowing students to take two undergraduate courses will make it possible for us to turn out more well-rounded graduates. This feature also harmonizes with the UBC Philosophy PhD course requirements. (We have a formal relationship of cooperation with the UBC programme.)

CHANGES IN REQUIREMENTS FOR M.A. PROGRAM

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

FROM: *Current Calendar Entry*

A candidate for the MA degree in Philosophy must

- complete four courses at the graduate level, gaining at least a second class standing (CGPA 3.0)
- submit and successfully defend a thesis giving evidence of independent critical ability
- show competence in such foreign languages as the Graduate Studies Committee determines to be required for the proposed research.

The department reserves the right to require any student to take undergraduate courses in addition to the required number of graduate courses.

TO: *Proposed Calendar Entry*

A candidate for the MA degree in Philosophy must

- complete six courses, one of which may, with permission of the Graduate Studies Committee, be a 300 or 400 level undergraduate course, the rest graduate courses.
- show competence in such foreign languages as the Graduate Studies Committee determines to be required for the proposed research.
- have or acquire competence in formal logic at the level of PHIL 214, or higher when relevant to his or her research.

Plus either

a) submit and successfully defend a thesis, normally no more than 100 pages in length, giving evidence of independent critical ability.

or

b) complete two additional courses, one of which is an individual directed studies course with the senior supervisor in which the student will review and revise a paper from a previously completed graduate course to a standard suitable in form and content for submission to a professional journal. The resulting paper normally shall not exceed 30 pages.

-normally attain a cumulative GPA of 3.5

-pass a final examination in which:

i) the paper produced in the individual studies course is evaluated and approved by the Supervisory Committee as conforming to the standard set out above.

ii) the student will present the paper in a public forum directed by the supervisory committee and at least one other faculty member in the field. After the public presentation and discussion, the expanded committee will arrive at an evaluation of the paper and the student's performance at the examination.

The department reserves the right to require any student to take undergraduate courses in addition to the required number of graduate courses:

RATIONALE:

We are proposing five changes:

1. Introduce a no-thesis MA option

The option, conforming to option (c) in the Calendar, will require students to take two additional courses and pass a final examination.

Rationale:

A Masters degree in philosophy is not required for admission to most PhD programs, and a MA is no longer generally sufficient for getting a job teaching at community colleges. With the introduction of the PhD program, our department is making our graduate instruction more professional and the proposed introduction of a no-thesis option to the MA program reflects this.

The program is designed specifically to help its graduates gain admission into top PhD programs. Additional preparation in the form of course work, and a good writing sample, which will be produced in one of the courses, are more valuable for this purpose than a thesis. The program will appeal especially to undergraduates who want to pursue a PhD degree but do not yet have the confidence or training to apply directly to the PhD programs of the best schools. We note that a CGPA of 3.5 is normal minimum for eligibility for SFU graduate fellowships.

2. Increase the number of courses required

The number of courses required on the thesis option will increase from 4 to 6; the no-thesis option requires 8.

Rationale:

Our current requirements are among the lowest in Canada (see attached survey), with only Windsor, Guelph and York matching them. There is compelling evidence that the MA requirement be 6 courses plus a thesis if conformity to Canadian standards is the aim. In order to provide our students with the sort of education expected at this level, more courses are needed and the departments with the best graduate programs in philosophy in Canada require 6 courses for their thesis MAs.

Somewhat surprisingly, adding course requirements (and, for that matter, increasing the number of students) will actually make the graduate program easier to staff. The reason is that, with the current low number of students who take courses, much of our instruction is done in individual directed studies courses. The sooner we are able to schedule more

regular graduate courses the better, and that will happen only when more students are taking them.

3. Set a maximum length for the MA thesis

A Masters Thesis should not normally exceed 100 pages.

Rationale:

We have found that the students sometimes spend too much time and effort producing a very long thesis. 100 pages is more than enough space for satisfying the requirements for an MA degree.

4. Allow one upper levels undergraduate course with approval of the Graduate Studies Committee to count towards satisfying requirements.

A major function of the course requirements in graduate programs is to round out the student's general education in the field. All students have some gaps in their education and could profit from an advanced undergraduate course in an area outside their specialization. Increasing the course requirements and allowing students to take an undergraduate course will make it possible for us to turn out more well-rounded graduates.

5. Introduce competence in formal logic at the level of PHIL 214 as a requirement.

Again, this brings our program in line with other programs. Competence in formal logic is expected for admission to most PhD programs.

MA Requirements Across Canada

A survey of all the English language programs that disclose such information in the Canadian Graduate Programs in Philosophy Handbook

Thesis Options:

Most common configuration: 6 semester courses plus a thesis:

Alberta
British Columbia
Calgary
Dalhousie
Ottawa
McMaster

Other options with a thesis:

Queens: 6 courses plus a 60 page thesis or 4 courses plus a 100 page thesis
Waterloo: 5 courses plus thesis
Windsor: 4 courses plus thesis
Guelph: 4 courses plus a thesis
York: 4 courses plus a thesis

Difficult to assess:

(But unless more than 5 credit hours are assigned per course, they exceed 4 courses plus a thesis)

McGill: 45 credit hours of which 24 is for a thesis
Manitoba: 24 credit hours plus a thesis.

No thesis options:

(All but the University of Toronto also have thesis options)

Ottawa: 10 courses plus a 30 page paper
Toronto: 8 courses (the only MA available)
Western: 6 courses plus comprehensive exam
Windsor: 6 courses plus major paper or 8 courses
Guelph: 6 courses plus a guided research project
York: 8 courses, three-paper portfolio, plus exam

COURSE ALTERATION AND RATIONALE

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

FROM:

1. PHIL 805-3 Directed Studies I
2. PHIL 815-3 Directed Studies II
3. PHIL 825-3 Directed Studies III
4. PHIL 845-3 Directed Studies IV
5. PHIL 855-3 Directed Studies V

TO:

1. PHIL 805-5 Directed Studies I
2. PHIL 815-5 Directed Studies II
3. PHIL 825-5 Directed Studies III
4. PHIL 845-5 Directed Studies IV
5. PHIL 855-5 Directed Studies V

RATIONALE:

As originally conceived, directed studies courses were to be reading courses requiring less work from the student than other graduate courses. In practice, however, there is no discernable difference between them and other courses. Given the SFU standard of granting 5 credit per graduate course, there is no rationale for granting only three for the Directed Studies Courses.