

**UNIVERSITY OF LETHBRIDGE
PHILOSOPHY DEPARTMENT**

**HONOURS THESIS GUIDELINES
2011/2012**

PREAMBLE

This document is meant to serve as a guide to students writing an Honours Thesis under the supervision of a member of the philosophy department at the University of Lethbridge. It will help students determine what qualifications they must have in order to be eligible to write an Honours Thesis, the procedure they must follow in order to enroll in the Undergraduate Thesis course offered by the philosophy department (Philosophy 4995), and the requirements that must be satisfied in order to successfully complete this course and acquire an Honours Thesis Designation on their final transcripts.

The procedures listed here include University of Lethbridge Calendar requirements (Cal.), Philosophy Department Requirements (PD-req.), and Philosophy Department Recommendations (PD-rec.). Calendar requirements include both Faculty of Arts of Science requirements (2011/12 Calendar, p. 76) and the prerequisites for Philosophy 4995 (2011/12 Calendar, p. 427).

This document was last revised Sept. 19, 2011, and it supersedes earlier versions.

WHY WOULD YOU WANT TO WRITE AN HONOURS THESIS?

Two Good Reasons:

1. You may wish to explore a topic in depth, learn more about it, work on understanding relevant writings, and develop your own ideas under the supervision of an advisor. If you do a thesis, and do it well, you will of course learn more about your specific topic and about methods of conducting philosophical research and constructing an argument. You may expect to develop your skills at understanding, synthesizing, evaluating, and criticizing accounts developed by others. You will have opportunities to develop your writing and organizational skills in a context more specialized and personalized than that provided by the departments standard course offerings. You will also benefit from working with a committee and receiving criticisms and comments from several different faculty members.
2. If you are interested in going on to graduate or professional school, doing an Honours Thesis under close supervision and orally defending that thesis may strengthen your application. It will also give you valuable experience if you go on to write an M.A. or Ph.D. thesis. Writing an Honours Thesis and orally presenting and defending it will not only enrich your university experience, it may assist future referees who can comment on your thesis and the abilities you may display in its oral defense.

One Bad Reason:

Some might suppose that enrolling for the Honours Thesis would provide a comparatively easy way of getting two course credits, while writing just one paper. This assumption would be incorrect. Considerable work is involved in background study, finding a suitable topic, and articulating and defending your thesis in writing and orally. The benefits are potentially great, but the amount of hard work and close philosophical reasoning involved in the effort will be considerable.

QUALIFICATIONS

In order to earn an Honours Thesis Designation on his or her transcript, a student must successfully complete Philosophy 4995. In order to be eligible to enroll in Philosophy 4995, a student must satisfy all of the following prerequisites:

1. 4th year standing (= a minimum of 90 credit hours) [cal.]
2. A cumulative GPA of 3.30 or higher [cal.]
3. A cumulative GPA of 3.50 or higher on all philosophy and logic courses [cal.]

ENROLMENT PROCEDURE

Step 1 – Forming a Supervisory Committee

- A Supervisory Committee consists of a Supervisor from the philosophy department and a minimum of one other Reader who may be from another department [cal.]
- The student should approach a department member of his or her choice to be his or her Supervisor. If the member agrees, he or she will propose a supervisory committee, in consultation with the student.
- Ideally, a Supervisory Committee should be formed by the end of the spring semester of the student's 3rd year; the deadline for forming a committee is one week prior to the add/drop deadline of the semester in which the student wishes to enroll [PD-req.]
 - Note: all Supervisory Committees must be approved by the Philosophy Department [cal.]

Step 2 – The Thesis Proposal

- Prior to enrolling in Philosophy 4995: Undergraduate Thesis, the student must submit a Thesis Proposal to his or her Supervisory Committee which must be approved by the committee.
 - There are no hard and fast rules about how to structure a Thesis Proposal. The essential requirement is that it be a fairly short document outlining your proposed area or topic of study, your plan of investigation, and ideally listing some of the literature you intend to read during your research. Consult with your intended supervisor about his or her preferred way to structure your Proposal.
- In order to allow sufficient time for feedback from the committee, it is recommended that the Thesis Proposal be submitted to the committee at least two weeks prior to the add/drop deadline of the semester in which the student wishes to enroll; the deadline for submitting a Thesis Proposal is 3 days prior to the add/drop deadline of the semester in which the student wishes to enroll.
- In addition to his or her Thesis Proposal, the student must, at the same time, submit an unofficial transcript for review by the Supervisory Committee [cal.]

- Note: Any subsequent changes to an approved Thesis Proposal must be approved by the Supervisory Committee

Step 3 – Registration

- Admission to the course is achieved through the approval of the Supervisory Committee and the Department [cal.]
- The student must register for Philosophy 4995 by the add/drop deadline of the semester in which he or she wishes to enroll [cal.]
- The registration form for Philosophy 4995 is available at the Registrar's office.

GUIDELINES

Assessment

- Written Component – the undergraduate thesis must be a sustained piece of supervised research demonstrating a superior level of academic ability; the thesis will be made publicly available by the department [cal.]
- Oral Component – the student is required to make a public oral presentation in which she or he defends her or his thesis. If the final draft of the thesis is not submitted to the members of the Supervisory Committee by the last day of classes of the 2nd semester, no oral defense will be scheduled.
- The Supervisory Committee will establish at the outset the weighting of the written and oral components of the thesis and the procedure for determining the final grade [cal.] including grade penalties for items that are not turned in by required deadlines [PD-req.]
- Honours Thesis Designation – the student is eligible to receive an Honours Thesis Designation on his or her official transcript only if he or she receives a minimum grade of B+ in Philosophy 4995 *and* satisfactorily completes the required oral component [cal.]
- A student who receives a grade between B and D, or who receives a grade of B+ or higher but fails to complete the oral component, will retain credit for the equivalent of two courses but will **not** receive the Honours Thesis Designation [cal.]

First Semester

- Much of the first semester of the undergraduate thesis course is normally to be dedicated to reading and thinking about the thesis topic. The student should also begin preliminary writing on some sub-themes relevant to his or her main argument.
- The student should arrange to meet regularly with her or his Supervisor to discuss what she or he has read and how her or his thinking on the topic has evolved; any faculty member who is unable to schedule regular meetings with the student should not agree to take on the supervisory role. In accepting a student for thesis work, the faculty member is committing himself or herself to giving time, reasonably prompt and constructive feedback, and serious attention to the student's work. [PD-rec.]
- The student must provide evidence of the work he or she has done – e.g., a detailed bibliography and article summaries – by the last day of classes in the first semester; failure to provide such evidence will result in a grade penalty agreed to by the Supervisory Committee at the outset. [PD-req.]

Second Semester

- The second semester of Philosophy 4995 is to be dedicated to writing and revising the Undergraduate Thesis, employing the study done in the first semester and incorporating any writing done and revised during that time.
- It is recommended that the student submit an outline of the Thesis to his or her Supervisor by the end of the second week classes of the 2nd semester [PD-rec.]
- It is recommended that the student continue to meet regularly with her or his Supervisor and that she or he submit multiple drafts the thesis to the Supervisor
- It is strongly recommended that the student submit a penultimate draft of his or her thesis to all members the Supervisory Committee at least two weeks prior to the last day of classes of the 2nd semester [PD-rec.]
- The student must submit his or her completed thesis to all members of the Supervisory Committee by the last day of classes of the 2nd semester. If the thesis is not received by this date, no oral defense will be scheduled. Furthermore, the lateness of papers will result in a grade penalty, as agreed to by the Supervisory Committee at the outset of the course [PD-req.]
- The oral defense of the thesis must be completed at least two weeks before the end of the exam period of the second semester [PD-req.]

CALENDAR

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| <i>Enrolment</i> | |
| Supervisory Committee | Recommended: spring 3 rd year |
| | Required: 1 week before add/drop, 1 st semester |
| Thesis Proposal | Recommended: 2 weeks before add/drop, 1 st semester |
| | Required: 3 days before add/drop, 1 st semester |
| Registration | Required: by add/drop, 1 st semester |
| <i>Guidelines</i> | |
| Evidence of 1 st semester work | Required: last day of classes, 1 st semester |
| Thesis Outline | Recommended: end of 2 nd week of classes, 2 nd semester |
| Penultimate Draft | Recommended: 2 weeks prior to the last day of classes, 2 nd semester |
| Completed Thesis | Required: last day of classes, 2 nd semester |
| Oral Defense | Required: 2 weeks before the last day of exam period, 2 nd semester |