The department recognizes that papers may reflect a plurality of philosophical styles and methodologies (historical, hermeneutical, phenomenological, analytical, textual criticism, and so on). Nevertheless, MA qualifying papers should have the following qualities, and will be evaluated accordingly:

(1) Form
   (a) The prose is clear and precise. The flow, pacing, and wording are very good.
   (b) The essay’s structure is easily discernable: the paper stays focused on the objective stated in the introduction; the way in which the middle sections develop and support the paper’s thesis is manifest; the progression of ideas is plain; the thinking moves logically from one paragraph to another; a clear outcome is reached in the conclusion (even if a negative one—for example: “It is impossible to establish that...”).
   (c) The bibliographical information and mode of citation of the sources are consistent and conform to a standard system (e.g. Harvard, Chicago, APA).
   (d) The paper is preceded by a 200-word abstract.
   (e) The length of the paper is appropriate (to be determined with the adviser, as it depends on the topic, the approach, etc.). Writing samples in PhD applications are typically between 15 and 20 double spaced pages long. The maximum length is set at 9,000 words, abstract and bibliography included.

(2) Content
   (a) The intent of the paper is clearly formulated at the outset.
   (b) The methodology is appropriate to the topic (e.g. historical research, hermeneutical approach, phenomenological analysis, literature review and critique). Presuppositions are made explicit.
   (c) The key aspects of the topic are addressed.
   (d) The pertinent philosophical concepts are clearly defined and explained, and are correctly employed.
   (e) The primary and secondary sources are pertinent and satisfactory.
   (f) The summaries or interpretations of the sources are accurate. The quotations and paraphrases supporting the interpretation or the point being made are suitable.
   (g) The paper makes a good case for its central claim(s): it offers appropriate evidence in support and addresses possible objections with fairness.