2.4. M.A. Qualifying Paper

- In addition to their course work, the students must write and submit a research paper, called “qualifying paper,” on a topic of their choice. The students must work with an adviser (of their choosing) on this paper. It may (but does not have to) be derived from a term paper (but it must be different from the M.A. thesis if the student has undertaken one). See the detailed guidelines and criteria in Attachment 3 of the present handbook.

- The maximum length of the paper is 9,000 words, abstract and bibliography included. The minimum length is to be determined with the adviser, depending on the topic, the approach, etc. The standard for the grading is a good research paper that demonstrates clarity of writing, solid argumentation, and familiarity with primary and secondary sources when applicable.

- The paper must be submitted via the online form [forms.gle/Wz9hxSMRt592uxxm6] by November 1 in the semester before the last in the program. The paper supervisor must approve the paper prior to submission. Students applying to Ph.D. programs will have their graded paper in time for possible use as a writing sample.

- The student also submits three faculty names (from the department only) as preferred graders, excluding the adviser under whose guidance the paper has been prepared. When the paper is derived from a term paper, the course instructor may be included, except if he/she was also the adviser for the paper.

- The program director chooses two faculty members. While trying to find the most suitable graders, he/she is not bound by the names submitted by the students, as he/she will spread out equally the work across the faculty, with a cap of three papers per faculty member.

- The two graders will each turn in a one-page report with their remarks and advice for improvement (especially in view of making the paper a good writing sample for future applications), and the final grade they have determined after consulting with each other (see below). Additionally, the paper can be annotated in electronic form.

- The grade and the reports are made available to the student, together with the names of the graders so that the student can request a meeting with the graders in order to get more feedback if needed.

- The grades are Passed with Distinction, Passed, Revise and Resubmit and Failed.

- If after consulting with each other the two graders do not settle on the same grade, the lower grade is adopted: “Distinction” from one grader and “Passed” from the other results in the final grade “Passed”; “Failed” from one grader results in the final grade “Failed”. If however one of the graders disagrees with this outcome, the program director asks a third faculty member to grade the paper. If two of the three grades are “Failed,” the final result is “Failed.” If two of the grades are “Distinction,” the final result is “Distinction.” Otherwise, the final result is “Passed.”

- The qualifying paper must receive at least “Passed” for a student to graduate. Students who receive a “Revise and Resubmit” do not have to wait until the next semester's deadline to resubmit. A “Fail” does require waiting until the next official deadline. Please refer to Attachment 3 for complete details.
M.A. Qualifying Paper Guidelines

1. Preparing and Submitting the Qualifying Paper

- The paper comes in addition to any paper written for the course work, although it may (but does not have to) be derived from a class paper. It must be different from the M.A. thesis if you are writing one.

- All MA qualifying papers must be read before submission by the student’s qualifying paper advisor. The advisor for the qualifying paper will sign a form sent by the Graduate Program Assistant to confirm that he or she has read the paper and finds it suitable for review. Students using a paper from a previous class may wish to ask the professor in question to act as the paper advisor.

- The maximum length of the paper is 9,000 words, abstract and bibliography included. The minimum length is to be determined with your adviser, depending on the topic, the approach, etc.

- You must follow the formatting template which is at the end of this document.

- The paper must be anonymized and submitted electronically using this online form: [forms.gle/Wz9bxsMRt592uxxm6], on or before November 1.

- You may submit up to three faculty names (from the department only) as preferred graders, excluding the adviser under whose guidance the paper has been prepared (when the paper is derived from a term paper, the course instructor may be included, except if he/she was also the adviser for the paper).

- The graduate program director will choose two faculty members. While trying to find the most suitable graders, he/she is not bound by the names you submitted, as he/she has to spread out equally the work across the faculty.

- By December 1, the two graders will each send back a one-page report with their remarks and advice for improvement (especially in view of making the paper a good writing sample for future applications), and the final grade they have determined after consulting with each other (see below). Additionally, the paper can be annotated in electronic form.

- The graduate program director will give you the grade and the reports, and the names of the graders as well, so that you can directly request from them additional feedback if needed.
2. The Evaluation Criteria

The department recognizes that papers may reflect a plurality of philosophical styles and methodologies (historical, hermeneutical, phenomenological, analytical, textual criticism, and so on). Nevertheless, a qualifying paper 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.
3. The Outcome

- Reviewers of the qualifying paper will provide an assessment in one of four categories: Pass with Distinction; Pass; Revise and Resubmit; Fail. The assessment will be provided to the DGS, the Graduate Studies Program Administrator, and the MA Coordinator.

- In the case of Pass, a page or two of commentary that assesses the quality of the paper and offers advice on how the student might adjust the paper if it is to be used as a sample paper for doctoral applications is required. For assessments requiring revisions, the reviewer should specify what these should be in sufficient details that the student has clarity on what must be done.

- Reviewers may determine an assessment of Revise and Resubmit. This assessment will be made if the paper is determined to be not yet of passable quality, but as holding promise to be passable if the paper is revised. Referees will each provide a report of at detailing the main strengths and weaknesses of the paper as well as specifying what revisions are needed.

- Revisions may include but are not limited to any of the following: additional research, as specified by the reader; clarifications to the analysis and argument, as specified by the reader; changes in grammar, formatting (including bibliography and citation), style, and presentation that reflect professional standards in the field.

- In the case of papers receiving the assessment of Revise and Resubmit, the student must first submit the revised work to her or his qualifying paper advisor, who repeats the sign-off process in step 1. The initial readers (or substitutes, if needed) then review the paper again, providing an assessment in one of the three categories.

- Fail means that that paper is not workable in its present form and that the referees deem the paper unsuitable for resubmission even after further work. The DGS may choose to advise the student to submit a substantially different paper in the future. In the case of a Fail, students go through the submission process anew in the next.

- If after consulting with each other the two graders do not settle on the same grade, the lower grade is adopted: “Distinction” from one grader and “Passed” from the other results in the final grade “Passed”; “Failed” from one grader results in the final grade “Failed.” If however one of the graders disagrees with this outcome, the program director asks a third faculty member to grade the paper. If two of the three grades are “Failed,” the final result is “Failed.” If two of the grades are “Distinction,” the final result is “Distinction.” Otherwise, the final result is “Passed.”
Anonymity: professors who are reviewing the papers will not know the student’s identity while reading the paper for the first time, they can receive that information if they wish after the decision. Students will not know the names of the reviewers until they receive a pass/fail decision, after which they will know the professors’ names along with the reports, in case they wish to seek further advice from the reviewers.

Students can request one or more anonymized papers that received Distinction available as models in pdf form from the Graduate Program Assistant, in case they wish to have a better sense of the standard for these papers. They will also be provided with a template for formatting the paper with a title page, bibliography, etc.

The qualifying paper must receive at least “Passed” for you to graduate.

Template starts on next page
Title; it should be descriptive of your paper’s content

[DO NOT ADD YOUR NAME]

M.A. Qualifying Paper

Date turned in [not the due date – this is an academic integrity issue!]
Abstract (200 words maximum, single spaced)

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Text of paper begins here, double-spaced. For any quotes or references, use in-text citations, clearly linked to an item in your bibliography, with the following form: (Author’s last name or shortened version of title, page numbers [use n.p. if there are no page numbers]).

An example: If you are quoting *The Prince*, by Niccolo Machiavelli, you would have a full entry in your bibliography (see below), and for a quote in the paper, you could use an in-text citation like this: Machiavelli is famous for asking, “Is it better for a prince to be feared or to be loved?” (*Prince*, 67).

If you are not quoting but making claims about facts that are not common knowledge, you also need to provide an in-text citation to a source listed in your bibliography.

Alternatively, you may use footnotes, but be aware that if you are doing a lot of textual analysis with one or more texts that you quote frequently, it is distracting and heavy-handed to use footnotes for each quotation. In-text citation is usually far preferable and generally is the norm for academic work.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

It should be alphabetized by author’s last name. Use the Diana Hacker writing manual, or other reliable writing guide, to see how to construct a proper bibliography. A great internet resource is the Purdue University Online Writing Lab (OWL). As a default, APA style.

Some basics:

For a BOOK:

Author’s last name, author’s initials [followed by: ed., eds. in the plural, if it is an edited volume]. (Year published). Title: And Subtitle if there is one. Place of publication, usually city and state: Publisher.

For a Book with a TRANSLATOR:

Author’s last name, author’s initials. (Year published). Title: And Subtitle if there is one (Name of translator, Trans.). Place of publication, usually city and state: Publisher.

For an ARTICLE in print (even if accessed online):

Author’s last name, author’s initials. (Year published). Title: And Subtitle If There Is One. Journal Title. Volume number (issue number), page range.

For an ARTICLE in a web-only publication:

Author’s last name, author’s initials. (Date of posting, if available). Title: And Subtitle If There Is One. Website or Online Publication Title. Volume number (issue number), page range. Retrieved from [provide the URL].