

Proposal: The current plan B Master's Degree will offer both the current MA Comprehensive Exams and a Master's Qualifying Paper as options from which a student will choose

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE MASTERS QUALIFYING PAPER AS OUTLINED BELOW
(Status: November 2018)

Submission Deadlines & Further Instructions

The current plan B Master's Degree will offer both the current MA Comprehensive Exams and a Master's Qualifying Paper as options from which a student will choose. Students opting for the MQP must submit one qualifying paper. Generally, these papers will be a minimum of 4000 words. The MQP due date for the fall semester is October 15. The MQP submission deadline for the spring semester is March 15.

The paper cannot previously have been accepted (a) as a term paper or (b) as publication at the time it is submitted as the qualifying paper. If the paper is based on a course paper, the student will have to show to the DGS how the MQP goes beyond the original.

Assessment

The papers will be assessed by a committee of three faculty members. Each reader will grade the paper (submitted anonymously). In case of failure, the student may request feedback.

The paper review committee will be constituted by the DGS; the DGS will appoint a committee chair. The chair will collect the grade sheets and comments from each committee member, tally the overall grade, and communicate these results to the DGS.

For grading, a 4-point scale will be used.

The Master's pass equivalency will be **2.0 or above**

The Master's score is self-evident from the rubric. A score of 2 is deemed Master's-level work, and an average of 2 or above will be the equivalent of a Master's comprehensive pass.

Using the rubric:

The rubric has four score categories (columns), and three horizontal content components (rows)

Each rubric **column** corresponds to a score level:

Outstanding = 4.0: Outright pass

Very good = 3.0: Some questions could be raised, but ready to go on to the next level.

MA Acceptable = 2.0: A reasonable Master's level paper with some deficiencies.

Grading Rubric for PhD & MQP Qualifying Papers

| Components | Outstanding | Very Good | MA Acceptable | Unacceptable |
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| Setup and Framing of the Issue, Clear Conclusion | <p>Clear, crisp, focused, interesting; well written and well organized; motivates the problem well; explains and clarifies the problem very effectively; lays the problem out quickly in an original, interesting, and imaginative way; shows that it is compelling; sums up an important position in accessible terms; positions the argument in relation to other work that has been done on the topic; discusses how the different parts of the paper contribute to the treatment of the problem; provides a complete answer to the "So what?" question. Conclusion is compelling from arguments presented.</p> | <p>Comprehensive but not exhaustive; reasonably succinct; reasonably well written; very clear; provides a novel and original statement of the problem; does a good job of laying out the problem; provides a good argument with valid inferences. Student exhibits an original point of view. Conclusion is stated but is not compelling, or some implications are missed.</p> | <p>Provides an off-the-shelf characterization of an established, usually small problem; is a little turgid; is unable to distinguish clearly between several different problems; gives the reader a sense of where it is going; shows appreciation for the issues; makes a small point that is vague. Conclusion is imprecise or weak.</p> | <p>Not clear or succinct; question is ambiguous or not understandable; misunderstands or misrepresents the problem; does not clarify the problem. Conclusion does not necessarily follow from argument.</p> |
| Engagement with the Literature | <p>Clear, crisp, lucid; original, imaginative, and thorough coverage and review of the literature; use of the literature runs through the entire</p> | <p>Comprehensive but not exhaustive; reasonably succinct; laid out for easy comprehension; literature is</p> | <p>Lacks original insight; reads and basically understands the right texts; omits some important literature; includes literature that is not</p> | <p>Student reads the right literature but does not understand it very well; does not understand or address</p> |

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| | <p>paper; shows sweeping grasp of the literature, including things that might not be obviously relevant at first; shows good judgment; is not merely comprehensive, but also identifies the most appropriate, interesting, and important works, critics, and points; identifies conceptual categories and uses them to classify the literature; pulls things together; sees relationships between two philosophers or works; knows when distinctions matter, when not to go after an idea, and when to back up and fill in; anticipates objections and deals with them effectively; uses the literature to advance the field</p> | <p>selected wisely and judiciously; shows command of most of the relevant literature; may have missed an important argument in an article; may not have taken into account other things that people have been saying</p> | <p>particularly interesting or worthwhile; does not quite get the most interesting insight or perspective on a particular part of the relevant literature; treats the literature uncharitably; has problems with arguments and interpretations throughout; critiques are easy or pointless</p> | <p>something important; gets the literature wrong; ignores some literatures; deliberately misinterprets some literature; provides caricature versions of important philosophers or texts; does not call upon primary sources completely or adequately; relies on secondary sources</p> |
| <p>Development/defense of the thesis(es)</p> | <p>Very well done; has a developed, mature, distinct voice and point of view; student has arrived at his or her own positions; develops the arguments in defense of the thesis; presents effective, convincing arguments that have not been made before; shows where student's position differs from the standard and what is new; makes</p> | <p>Well developed, but not quite as clear as it might be; the whole structure does not progress with the expected clarity, rigor, and fullness</p> | <p>Adequately argued but uninteresting; does not make all the arguments needed to deal with the problem effectively; arguments are less than fully convincing; provides some arguments for the thesis and then does not consider obvious objections</p> | <p>Unclear; not well articulated; has mistakes in logic; is not clear what is being argued or how the pieces fit together; makes claims that are not particularly plausible and does not provide adequate support for them; leaves claims hanging;</p> |

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| | <p>thought-provoking points; demonstrates that seemingly implausible points are plausible; sophisticated handling of potential objections; presents a serious new argument as a dialectic</p> | | | <p>examples are not relevant; the conclusion does not follow from the argument; unaware of obvious objections; does not understand the objections; response to objections fails or raises additional objections</p> |
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Completion of Requirement

Students will be considered to have passed the requirement for the MA program after successful passing of the qualifying paper. If the student fails the MQP, s/he may retake it *one more time* the next semester. MA students may not switch assessment methods after one failure.

Students who do not successfully defend their papers will not receive an MA degree.

Appeal Process

MQP grade appeals will follow standard department and university grade appeal procedures.