

# **Protocol relating to the graduation phase of the MA Programme in Philosophy**

## **0. Objective of this Protocol**

The objective of this Protocol relating to the graduation phase is to provide clearer information as to what is expected of whom in the graduation phase of the MA programme in Philosophy. In addition, it is anticipated that a better structured graduation phase will lead to a reduction in study delays.

## **1. The MA thesis, final attainment levels and assessment criteria**

The student is required to write an MA thesis in the second semester of the MA programme in Philosophy. There are 20 ECTS available for the thesis. The MA thesis should clearly show that the student meets the attainment levels which have been set for this programme in terms of knowledge and skills. More specifically, the MA thesis and the working method for the thesis should demonstrate that the student:

- has acquired knowledge of systematic philosophy and its history, and of recent developments in contemporary philosophy, that is founded upon and extends that associated with the bachelor's level, and that provides a basis for originality in developing and applying original ideas and analyses;
- knows the discussions in the forefront of their field, and is able to take part in them;
- is able to contribute to current discussions on philosophy and in new and complex contexts related to philosophy;
- is able to handle philosophical complexity and to formulate judgments based on information from diverse sources, even if this information is limited or incomplete;
- has a realistic view of the tenability and reliability of his/her own conclusions;
- is able to integrate or confront different approaches to philosophical questions;
- in short, is able to write philosophical papers, the quality of which equals that of articles in refereed journals in the field.

In order to assess whether the required final attainment levels have been achieved, the MA thesis will be assessed on the basis of the following criteria:

Working plan:	has the student demonstrated the ability (under the guidance of the supervisor) to devise a working plan for the MA thesis?
Embedding:	does the MA thesis demonstrate that the research adequately reflects the current state of affairs in the relevant field of research?
Representation:	are the assumptions and points of view of third parties adequately represented?
Argumentation:	does the MA thesis make sufficient use of explicit arguments for the points of view which it contains? Are the sub-arguments well-founded, do they demonstrate sufficient cohesion, are they relevant to the problem or objective and do they adequately support the conclusion?
Philosophical content:	does the MA thesis have sufficient philosophical content?

Creativity:	does the MA thesis show the potential to be able to make an original contribution to the subject in terms of defining the problem, presentation, method of approach and/or treatment of the subject?
Presentation:	does the MA thesis make a good impression visually?
Use of language:	is the use of language correct, sufficiently clear, and comprehensible? Is the use of language appropriate for the subject matter? Is the technical terminology, where necessary, explained clearly enough?
Design and structure:	is the MA thesis logically structured, and does it contain the necessary standard elements such as an introduction and problem definition, chapter structure and conclusion?
Use of instruments:	does the MA thesis, where useful or necessary, make effective use of citations, diagrams, illustrations, notes, bibliography, etc.?

## 2. The graduation phase

The graduation phase starts at the point in time when the student and the supervisor of the MA thesis confirm arrangements in the *Agreements on the MA Thesis* form regarding planning and any other requirements relating to the thesis. This takes place on or before the point in time when the student has completed half the MA programme. The student's tutor will see that the graduation phase starts at the appropriate time. The graduation phase ends with the MA examination.

## 3. Agreements relating to the graduation phase and supervision

The agreements relating to the planning and supervision of the writing of the MA thesis are set out in writing by the student and the supervisor in the *Agreements on the MA Thesis* Form. The agreements relate to the choice of subject of the thesis and the phasing of the research leading up to the thesis. **At least** four reporting/feedback instances should be included in the phasing, which should relate to the following:

1. The research question and the selection of literature
2. The structure of the research
3. The pre-final version
4. The final version

In addition, once the research question has been determined, an indication of the scope of the MA thesis should be established.

The schedule chosen should be realistic, taking into account the time which is available for writing the thesis (560 hrs) and the student's other teaching obligations. The student will provide his/her tutor with a copy of the relevant form.

The supervisor ensures that the agreed periods within which the student is required to provide a report are observed. In the event of a failure to meet any of the deadlines, if such failure is expected to result in a substantial delay, the schedule will be modified and the student will keep the tutor informed of this modification accordingly. The supervisor will respond as quickly as possible to the reports submitted by the student,

but in any event within 5 working days in the case of reports 1 and 2, within 15 working days for report 3 and in the case of report 4, within 10 working days after receipt of the report.

#### **4. Approval by supervisor and second reviewer**

As soon as the supervisor has approved the MA thesis, he/she will notify the Board of Examiners. He/she will submit a copy of the thesis and will propose a second reviewer to assess the thesis from among the Faculty staff members. If there is no suitable expert available within the Faculty, an expert from outside the Faculty will be proposed as second reviewer. If the Board of Examiners adopts the proposal, the committee will ask the relevant person to act as second reviewer, and, if he/she agrees, will provide him/her with a copy of the MA thesis. The second reviewer will give a marginal assessment of the thesis, based on the assessment criteria included under section 1 of this protocol, and will advise the supervisor of his/her findings within 10 days. In the event that the supervisor does not share the opinion of the second reviewer, and discussion of their differences of opinion does not lead to agreement, the final decision rests with the Board of Examiners. The second reviewer will inform the Board of Examiners within the shortest possible time of his/her findings.

#### **5. The Graduation Committee and the MA examination**

Simultaneously with a proposal of a second reviewer, the supervisor will make a proposal to the Board of Examiners for the composition of the Graduation Committee. The Graduation Committee generally comprises three examiners, at least two of whom should be affiliated to the Faculty of Philosophy. The candidate's thesis supervisor will in any event be a member of the Graduation Committee. Generally, the second reviewer will also be a member of the committee. The composition of the Graduation Committee should be such as to safeguard the level and integrity of the MA examination.

As soon as the second reviewer has confirmed to the Board of Examiners that the thesis meets the requirements set, the Board of Examiners will appoint the members of the Graduation Committee. The thesis supervisor cannot be the chairman of the Graduation Committee, except in exceptional cases. The student will provide the Board of Examiners with the required number of copies of the thesis for the members of the Graduation Committee.

#### **6. Enrolling for the examination**

The student may only apply for the MA examination (the graduation) if all educational obligations have been met and once the Board of Examiners has confirmed that the thesis is considered admissible. Not later than three weeks before the anticipated examination date, the candidate should submit to the student administration, Mrs. Y.M.M. van Eijk, the following documents (it is important to make an appointment in time):

- Certificates of examinations passed at academic institutions other than Leiden University;
- Approval of the master's programme by the Board of Examiners;
- Proof of enrolment (student card);
- Two copies of the MA thesis.

## **7. The MA examination**

The MA examination consists of an interview with the candidate by a Graduation Committee. The interview generally relates to the subject of the MA thesis and possibly a selection of other subjects. The final grade of the MA thesis is decided during the deliberations of the Graduation Committee following the interview element of the MA examination. The thesis supervisor proposes a final grade, which is substantiated on the basis of at least the assessment criteria mentioned under 1 in section 3 above, and also takes into account the findings of the second reviewer and the candidate's responses during the interview. The Graduation Committee advises the Board of Examiners in writing of the motivation of the final grade based on the assessment criteria.

## **8. Complaints**

A student can contact his/her tutor with regard to any complaints relating to supervision in the graduation phase.

For complaints about the assessment of the MA thesis, a student can apply to the Board of Examiners.

Should no satisfactory resolution be forthcoming once these steps have been taken, the student can then apply to the Examination Appeals Board.