

# Ryerson Philosophy MA Program Handbook

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## **Finding Forms, Policies and Information**

This Handbook refers to several policies and forms. Many program-related documents and forms are available at the program website:

<http://www.ryerson.ca/philosophy/programs/graduate/>

The Yeates School of Graduate Studies (YSGS) website ([www.ryerson.ca/graduate/](http://www.ryerson.ca/graduate/)) also posts many forms, guidelines and policies under 'Current Students' → 'Academic Matters'. Ryerson Senate policies are available on the Senate website, [www.ryerson.ca/senate/policies](http://www.ryerson.ca/senate/policies).

If you cannot find the form or information that you need, contact the Program Administrator or Program Director for help.

## **Program Description**

Focused on core areas of philosophy, the Philosophy MA program is designed for students who wish to broaden or deepen their undergraduate experience in philosophy and for students planning to pursue a PhD in philosophy. Our innovative 5-term program includes both a Major Research Paper stream and a Thesis stream.

## **Governance**

The program is governed by a set of bylaws (available on the program website), as well as applicable Ryerson and Yeates School of Graduate Studies (YSGS) policies. The Program Director (Dr. Glenn Parsons) is responsible for providing academic leadership and program management. A Program Council has power to approve changes to the program or curriculum. The Program Council typically meets at least once in each of the Fall and Winter semesters, and includes two elected student representatives. Day to day operations of the program are handled by the Program Administrator, Malu Maia.

The Ryerson Philosophy Graduate Students Union is a student-run organization that holds various events during the academic year. The Students Union is not governed by the program or department; for more information see [www.rpgsu.com](http://www.rpgsu.com).

## Curriculum

### Program Requirements

To complete the program, students must fulfill a coursework component and one milestone project—either a Major Research Paper (MRP) or a thesis. Milestones are pass/fail: no grade is assigned. Students typically complete their milestone project in term 5. Typical progression through the program, in either the thesis or MRP stream, is as follows:

STREAM	TERM 1 (FALL)	TERM 2 (WINTER)	TERM 3 (SPRING/SUMMER)	TERM 4 (FALL)	TERM 5 (WINTER)
Major Research Paper	PH8003: Professional Seminar; 2 electives	3 electives	MRP research; PH8001: Area Reading Exam	MRP research; 1 elective	MRP research; 1 elective
Thesis	PH8003: Professional Seminar; 2 electives	3 electives	Thesis research and proposal submission; PH8001: Area Reading Exam	Thesis research	Thesis research

### Time to Completion

The maximum time to complete all program requirements is three years from initial registration, after which time students will be withdrawn from the program. In exceptional circumstances, students may petition the Program Director for additional time (Senate policy 142, 3.8.2; for the application form, see the YSGS website). Time spent on a leave of absence does not count in calculation of time taken to complete the degree (Senate policy 142, 3; see below).

### Coursework

There are two required courses. All students must take the *Proseminar* course (PH8003) in their first semester. The Proseminar introduces students to professional and academic skills necessary for success in the program. This is a pass/fail course. All students must also complete the *Area Readings* course (PH8003); this is typically taken in the third (Spring/Summer) semester. This is a pass/fail course; for more on this course, see below.

Students in the MRP stream take seven elective courses; students in the thesis stream take five. Courses are listed in the current Ryerson Calendar (see also the program website). Not all courses are offered each year: a list of courses to be offered will be made available prior to the start of the academic year. Students are reminded that course content, structure, and evaluation method, insofar as consistent with Ryerson policy, are at the discretion of instructors. Note that students may only receive credit for any given course once, with the exception of PH8122 *Topics in Philosophy*.

## Grades

The grading system for MA level courses is given below (Senate policy 142, 4.1.1.) For graduate level courses, the minimum passing grade is a B minus (70%).

Letter Grade	% range	GPA score
A+	90-100	4.33
A	85-89	4.00
A-	80-84	3.67
B+	77-79	3.33
B	73-76	3.00
B-	70-72	2.67
F	0-69	0

## Incomplete Coursework/Milestones

Students who cannot complete a course or milestone due to documented medical or compassionate grounds may be assigned a grade of incomplete (INC) by the instructor/supervisor (Senate policy 142, 4.1.2). Students should be aware of the following Ryerson policies concerning incomplete grades:

- “An INC can be awarded only when some work remains to be completed and when the completion of the outstanding work or an alternative final examination may result in a passing grade. The outstanding work or alternative examination must be completed by a specified date not later than the end of classes in the next term. The INC will be replaced by an official course grade when the work is completed, or with an F if not completed.”
- Students must petition their instructor for an INC as soon as reasonably possible, given the nature of their circumstances. Supporting documentation (e.g. a Ryerson Medical Certificate) must be provided.
- “Instructors awarding an INC grade must provide the student, within seven working days, with a written statement of outstanding work to be completed and the deadline for completion or alternate examination. The instructor must also file a copy of this documentation with the student’s graduate program office.”

## Course Substitutions/Repeats

For graduate level courses, the minimum passing grade is a B minus (70%) (Senate policy 142, 4.1). Students who fail an elective course may, with authorization from the program director, take a different course and substitute it for the failed course (see Senate policy 142, 3.5.3). Students may also repeat a course once, with authorization from the Program Director: the original grade shall remain on the transcript but only the second grade counts toward GPA calculation (whether higher or lower) (Senate policy 142 3.5.4).

## Auditing

MA students can audit no more than two one-semester graduate courses. Students wishing to audit must complete the Course Audit form (see link below). The consent of the course instructor, as well as the auditing student's supervisor, is required. Note that some participation is required when auditing a course. "Courses taken for audit will not count for credit toward the student's graduation requirements, but will appear on the student's transcript with the designation "AUD" in lieu of a grade."

Be aware that, although it is apparently possible for graduate students to audit undergraduate courses, Ryerson insists on charging a \$400 fee. If this is something you are interested in pursuing, please contact the Program Director.

Course Audit Form: (<http://www.ryerson.ca/content/dam/graduate/current-students/form-downloads/course-audit-form.pdf>)

## PH8001: Area Readings

PH8001 *Area Readings* "consists of independent but guided research in a core area of philosophy chosen by the student in consultation with the program director. The Area Reading course is an opportunity for students to broaden their philosophical knowledge while sharpening their research skills."

This course is essentially directed study that lays the foundations for the second year MRP/thesis project. Since PH8003 is typically a preparation for the writing of a thesis or MRP, the overseeing of AREs will normally be considered supervision, rather than teaching. Normally, the person to supervise your Area Readings will be the same person to supervise your final project. You should be approaching possible supervisors by the second semester of your program.

The exact format and scope of your Area Readings course is something you must work out with your supervisor. You will both agree to a reading list and a set of requirements for completion. Some things to note:

- You should expect the amount of material involved to be roughly equivalent to that in a graduate seminar (the precise amount of reading, writing, etc will of course vary with different faculty members and different material).
- Format is up to the supervisor and student, but most faculty will require at least some meetings for discussion of the material and/or your work. Bear in mind that, this being independent study, the supervisor will not use this time for lecture-type presentation of the material.
- Once agreed, your supervisor will file a copy of your ARE course plan with the program office. Bear in mind that Area Readings course plans are subject to final approval by the Program Director.
- PH8001 Area Readings is a pass/fail course: **no letter grade is assigned**.
- Instructors must file Area Readings grades in **mid-August**; the program will announce the precise date in the Spring. You and your advisor should set a schedule that will see you completed ahead of that date. Your final two semesters will be busy with writing

your final project, TA/grading work, and, if you are in the MRP stream, coursework. Finishing the Area Readings course on time is therefore in your best interest.

- **If you are planning to write a thesis in your second year**, preparing your thesis proposal will typically be a component of your ARE: thesis proposals are due at the end of the summer term (see below).

## Major Research Paper (MRP) Milestone

A Major Research Paper (MRP) is a sustained investigation of a philosophical topic. Normally, an MRP should be about 35-40 double-spaced pages in length (roughly 12,000 words).

Students will typically complete their Area Readings course and their MRP requirement under the supervision of the same faculty member. Students are responsible for approaching potential supervisors, who must be members of YSGS (for a list of current members see the program website). The Program Director can assist students in identifying potential supervisors. By October 15<sup>th</sup> of the fourth term of study, students must submit a one to two page description of the proposed MRP, with a suggested bibliography, to the program office (for the proposal form, see the program website). The supervisor and the Program Director must approve this proposal.

Upon completion, MRPs are evaluated by the supervisor and a second reader, who is normally also a Faculty Member in the program. **The second reader must be allowed a minimum of two weeks to assess the MRP.**

MRPs are pass/fail milestones. A student does not complete the MRP milestone unless (1) both evaluators file, with the program office, a signed evaluation form passing the MRP and (2) the student files, with the program office, an electronic copy of the MRP incorporating any required revisions.

Deadlines for filing MRPs with the Program Office, in order to meet the June and November convocation dates, shall be announced by the program each year. A suggested timeline for timely completion of the MRP requirement is the following:

- October 15<sup>th</sup>: submit MRP proposal to program office
- Late October: second reader is assigned by Program Director, on advice of student and supervisor
- March 1<sup>st</sup>: submit a draft of MRP to supervisor
- March 15: supervisor returns draft with comments
- April 1<sup>st</sup>: submit revised version for final evaluation by supervisor and second reader
- April 15<sup>th</sup>: supervisor and second reader complete MRP evaluation form (on program website)
- Late April/early May (specific date TBA): filing of MRP evaluation forms and completed MRP (with any required revisions) with program office.

Please discuss the schedule for your project with your supervisor: he or she may have earlier deadlines for drafts, etc.

For more detailed information, see the full program policy on MRPs, available on the program website.

## Thesis Milestone

A Thesis is a philosophical work of about 100-120 pages: the standard of evaluation is a short monograph published by an academic press. Writing a thesis is a major undertaking and students should carefully consider the logistics involved before choosing the thesis route through the program.

Students will typically complete their Area Readings course and their thesis requirement under the supervision of the same faculty member. Students are responsible for approaching potential supervisors, who must be members of YSGS (for the list of current members see the program website). The Program Director can assist students in identifying potential supervisors. By the end of the third (summer) term of study, students will submit a one to two page description of the proposed thesis, with a suggested bibliography, to the program office (for proposal form, see the program website). Preparing the thesis proposal will typically be a component of the summer ARE requirement (see above). The supervisor and the Program Director must approve this proposal. Proposals that show insufficient progress or preparation for the thesis project will not be approved.

Upon completion, theses must be defended in an oral examination before an evaluation committee consisting of the supervisor, the Program Director and two other examiners who are typically other Ryerson faculty that are members of our Program. You should discuss potential examiners with your supervisor—there are no external examiners, except in exceptional circumstances. To pass the thesis requirement, the examination committee must pass both the written thesis and the student's performance in the oral examination.

Deadlines for filing theses with the Program Office, in order to meet convocation dates, shall be announced by the program each year. Generally, to make the Spring convocation deadline, **oral examinations should be held no later than the third week of April**, and the student must see that each Examining committee member gets a hard copy of the thesis four weeks prior to the defence (policy 142, 6.4.1). Therefore, the thesis should be ready to go to the examination committee by the **third week of March**.

A suggested timeline for timely completion of the thesis requirement is the following:

- Late August: submit Thesis proposal to program office
- Late October: examiners assigned by Program Director on advice of student and supervisor
- February 15th: submit a full draft of thesis to supervisor
- March 1<sup>st</sup>: supervisor returns draft with comments
- March 15<sup>th</sup>: submit revised version for final evaluation by examining committee. Supervisor schedules oral defence by filing 'Recommendation for MA Thesis/Project Oral Examination' Form (see program website)
- Third week of April: Oral defence held – examining committee files 'Report of the Oral Examining Committee' Form (see program website), and informs student of any required revisions.
- Late April/early May (final deadline TBA): student files thesis (with any required revisions) with program office.

Please discuss the schedule for your project with your supervisor: he or she may have earlier deadlines for drafts, etc.

Ryerson has a number of regulations regarding MA theses and defences; you can find these in section six of Senate Policy 142. YSGS also has certain specific requirements for thesis formatting: these are listed in the document “Thesis, Dissertation and MRP Submission Requirements”, found on the YSGS website.

## **Removal from Program**

Students who fail a course or milestone requirement will be assigned a provisional academic standing. Students who fail *two* course/milestone requirements are withdrawn from the program and are not eligible for readmission. For more information on academic standing, see Senate Policy 142, 4.3.

## **Student Information**

### **Enrolment and Student Fees**

Ryerson has a policy of continuous enrolment, which means that “students in graduate programs will be required to maintain continuous enrolment in every semester of their program until all requirements of their program have been met, unless they have been granted a Leave of Absence or have withdrawn from the program” (Senate policy 142, 3.2). Students must pay fees for every semester they are registered in the program; the only exception to this is when students are on an leave of absence (see below).

Note that there is a minimum fee for completing the program: in the exceptional circumstance where a student completes the program in fewer than five semesters, they may be required to pay a “Balance of Degree” fee to reach this minimum fee (Senate policy 142 3.9).

Students who withdraw from the program with a satisfactory progress report may be considered for readmission (Senate policy 142. 1.5), but note that “if a student withdraws when the only outstanding program requirement is the capstone requirement (i.e., thesis or MRP) and then wishes to re-enter the program, he/she will be required to pay fees for the terms during which they were absent” (Senate policy 142, 1.5).

### **Course Registration**

Registration for most courses is done by the student, online. Typically, Fall course registration will start on RAMSS at the end of August, Winter course registration will start in the middle of December, and Summer course registration begins in the middle of April. Specific dates are published on the YSGS webpage, under ‘Significant Dates’.

Prior to the opening of registration, the Program Administrator will forward information about self-enrolment. Please spend some time familiarizing yourself with the RAMSS support instructions in advance of the online self-enrolment period. You are strongly encouraged to enrol as soon as the self-enrolment period starts, as space may be limited.

Also note the following;

- In each term, all students will be enrolled in GD1000 by the Program Administrator. This is not a course *per se* but rather a code that indicates continuous registration until the completion of the degree program. If you are finishing a Thesis or MRP and need one more term to complete, please e-mail the Program Administrator with your request (be aware you will need to pay tuition for the term; see above).
- Courses cannot be dropped online. Any request to drop a course must be approved by the Program Director and processed by the Program Administrator. It is the student's responsibility to contact the Program Administrator by the deadline to drop courses.

Students are academically responsible for the courses they are registered in. Please double check your course registration on RAMSS each term. Should you find any error in your course registration, please inform the Program Administrator immediately.

## **Supervision**

Students must choose a supervisor by the start of their third semester: the supervisor will oversee completion of the Area Readings course (PH8003) and the milestone project (MRP or thesis). Since the *Area Reading Exam* course requirement is typically a preparation for the writing of a thesis or MRP, the overseeing of AREs will normally be considered supervision, rather than teaching.

Only faculty who are members of YSGS may supervise students in the Philosophy MA program (non-YSGS faculty can teach, but not supervise). For the full program policy on YSGS membership, and a list of current YSGS members, see the program website. Note that the program strongly recommends that untenured faculty not undertake an excessive role in graduate supervision, and not supervise more than one student at a time.

The student-supervisor relationship is a critical one, and YSGS has a policy on the roles and responsibilities of both student and advisor. When students choose a supervisor, both parties must read this policy, and then submit a signed copy of the 'Student-Supervisor Discussion Checklist' to the Program Office (for these documents, see the YSGS website, under 'Academic Matters' → 'Supervision'). If students have issues that they cannot resolve with their supervisor, they should consult the Program Director and/or Department Chair for advice and/or dispute resolution.

## **Academic Accommodations**

Academic accommodations will be provided for students with a disability, physical or mental, temporary or permanent, as per Ryerson's Senate policy #159. Students with a diagnosed disability should register with Ryerson's Academic Accommodation Support office at the start of the term. Before the first graded work is due, students should inform their instructor, through an "Accommodation Form for Professors", that they are registered with Academic Accommodation Support. Students who face an unforeseen disability during the semester may request interim accommodation, pending receipt of documentation, by registering with

Academic Accommodation Support. Note that generally, employment commitments will not constitute grounds for academic consideration.

Students who are either not offered an alternate arrangement, or who do not accept the alternate arrangement offered by an instructor, should consult with the Program Director and/or the Department Chair. For more detail on accommodations, see also Senate policy 152, *Graduate Academic Consideration and Appeals*.

### **Grade Disputes and Academic Appeals**

It is the student's responsibility to attempt to resolve all course related issues with the instructor as soon as they arise. Students who believe that an assignment, test or exam, either in whole or part, has not been appropriately graded should first review their concerns with their instructor within ten working days of the date when the graded work is returned to the class. Note that an instructor may require a written request for re-grading, stating why the work warrants a higher grade. It is not acceptable for students to request a higher grade without justification based on the merit of work.

When issues are not resolved with an instructor, or when a student does not receive a timely response from an instructor, the Program Director should be contacted for assistance. An appeal may be filed only if the issue cannot be resolved appropriately with the instructor or Program Director. For more information on grade reassessment and appeals, see Senate policy 152, section 1C and section 2.

### **Academic Misconduct**

Academic misconduct is a serious issue and will be dealt with seriously in this program. Academic misconduct is governed by Ryerson's policy 60 on Academic Integrity. Note that "All members of the Ryerson community have a responsibility to inform themselves about academic integrity and misconduct, including the contents of this policy." In particular students should be aware of what constitutes academic misconduct in relation to coursework and research (Senate policy 60, sec 2).

### **Leaves of Absence**

Leaves are granted only in cases of severe illness, extreme financial difficulty, or for parental leave (see Senate policy 142, section 3). Leaves typically are for one semester and are subject to approval by the Program Director (the form can be found on YSGS website). Note that "Students on a LOA will not be entitled to use the services of the University or the program, during the leave" (Senate policy 142. 3.3); hence students on an LOA may not submit work to a supervisor or instructor for grading or feedback. Students returning from a LOA must register for a minimum of one term before completion of the program.

## Withdrawing from the Program

Students who are unable to continue their program of study, or who have not paid fees, must withdraw from the program (Senate policy 142, 3.6-7). Students who have withdrawn may apply for readmission, but readmission is not guaranteed.

## Scholarships

Students in the first year of the program can apply for external funding for their second year of study (final three terms). Some students are *required* to apply for these awards as a condition of their funding package: all are *strongly encouraged* to apply, provided that the GPA eligibility requirement (an A- average in your most recent twenty courses) is met.

The main external award for second year study is the *Bombardier Canada Graduate Scholarship* (MA level), funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC). Universities receive an allotment of these awards from the federal government, based on the amount of SSHRC grant funding held at the institution. For 2018/19, Ryerson's allotment is **eighteen SSHRC awards**, university wide (see [http://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/Students-Etudiants/CGSAllocations-QuotasBESC\\_eng.asp](http://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/Students-Etudiants/CGSAllocations-QuotasBESC_eng.asp)).

SSHRC requires applicants to "have achieved a first-class average, as determined by the host institution, in **each** of the last two completed years of study (full-time equivalent)". Ryerson defines "first-class average" as A minus or higher, in each of the most recent two years of study. Note also that you can only hold this award once: **if you held a SSHRC MA award during your first year at Ryerson (or during another degree elsewhere), you are not eligible** to apply for this award for your second year. Also be aware that there is a lifetime maximum of six years of total federal/provincial government funding, which includes SSHRC and OGS funding (see the OGS awards guide, or consult the Program Director for more information).

Students apply directly to SSHRC online; the due date is typically the end of November. A session on how to apply for SSHRC and OGS awards will be held in September as part of the Proseminar; all eligible students are required to attend. Results of this competition are released in early April.

Subsequent to the release of SSHRC competition results, our program will hold an internal competition for *Ontario Graduate Scholarship* awards. The number of awards available is subject to available funding. Students who are unsuccessful in the SSHRC competition may apply for OGS funding, provided the GPA eligibility requirement is met. The requirement is the same as for SSHRC: an A- average in each of the last two completed years of full-time study. OGS applications are typically due in late April.

Students in their second year who are considering pursuing a PhD should apply for *SSHRC Doctoral Awards*. Applications are completed online but then must be submitted to the Philosophy department for ranking. Applications are then reviewed by an interdisciplinary committee at YSGS, and a certain number of applications are put forward by Ryerson for national competition. Doctoral award applications are usually due in our program office by mid-October.

The Proseminar session mentioned above also covers Doctoral awards, and all eligible students are strongly encouraged to attend this workshop. For more information on SSHRC and OGS awards, as well as links to the appropriate forms, see the YSGS website.

## Teaching Assistantships and Grading

Teaching Assistantship positions depend upon current course offerings in the Faculty of Arts. Positions will be assigned, by the Program Administrator, prior to the start of each semester. First year students will be given priority in the assignment of TA contracts.

Second year students may be offered grading contracts; contracts will be assigned by the Program Administrator in the first month of the semester, based on student qualifications. Students who are grading essays or assignments are required to attend a training session. Note that contract hours are for grading time, not for preparation.

According to the current CUPE collective agreement, students may work a maximum of 390 hours in one academic year. No TA or grading contracts are available during the Spring/Summer semesters. The program advises students to think carefully about the work involved before accepting a large grading contract.

## Research Assistantships

In the past, the MA program has funded Research assistantship positions for students in their third (summer) semester. This practice has been discontinued, as this funding is now provided to students in the form of a stipend. Note that in cases where faculty members have independent funding for RA positions (from a research grant, for example) the MA program is not involved in advertising these positions.

## Travel Funding

Funding for conference travel is spread across multiple awards; also, many of these are matching awards, so it is worth thinking carefully about which to apply for, and in what order. The department will contribute \$200 toward conference travel for each student. Below are suggestions for applying for additional funding, depending on the trip involved. Note that, typically, only students *presenting* work at a conference are eligible for these awards. In all cases of travel be sure to keep all of your receipts, ticket stubs, boarding passes, etc.

For a small trip (roughly \$500 or less), apply for the Ryerson Student Union Graduate Travel Grant (up to \$500) <http://www.rsuonline.ca/graduate-travel-grant> Applications are reviewed four times per year; March 31st, June 30th, September 30th, and December 31st. Decision time is three weeks. This grant may be held once per academic year.

For longer trips in Canada, apply for these three awards (total potential funding = \$1200):

- a. *Ryerson Student Union Graduate Travel Grant* (up to \$500)  
<http://www.rsuonline.ca/graduate-travel-grant> Applications are reviewed four times in a year; March 31st, June 30th, September 30th, and December 31st. Decision time three weeks. This grant may be held once per academic year.
- a. *Ryerson Faculty of Arts Graduate Student Travel Grant* (\$200 matching grant)

The department will commit \$200 so that you can apply for this award. Apply anytime. This grant may be held once per academic year. The application form is on the Faculty of Arts website, under 'Students'→Information for→Graduate→Funding Opportunities'

- b. *Yeates School of Graduate Studies (YSGS) Ryerson Graduate Student Travel Funding* (\$500; apply anytime - decision time two weeks) This grant may be held once per academic year. The application form is buried on the YSGS website, under 'Current Students'→Financial Matters→Funding Opportunities.

For conferences outside Canada: if the above funds are insufficient, apply for the three grants listed above and subsequently to the *International Conference & Research Support Fund*. The application form is buried on the YSGS website, under 'Current Students'→Financial Matters→All Funding Sources→Additional Support'. Apply anytime. Note: this grant matches department, faculty or YSGS funding up to \$1000 (it will *not* match RSU travel grant funding).

Additional travel funding may be available through your CUPE3 union: for more information, see <http://cupe3904.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Unit-3-General-Assistance-Fund-Claim-Form-NEW.pdf>

If you can't cover your expenses in this way, contact the Program Director regarding the possibility of further funding from the department. Further funding is contingent on availability of funds, and will not be more than a few hundred dollars. Also, you are eligible for further funding, should any be available, only if you have applied for the above awards (where applicable).