



**Department of Philosophy**

## **Senior Thesis I and Senior Thesis II**

**(PHIL 403 & PHIL 404)**

### **GUIDELINES**

**(Version of October 6, 2015)**

#### **Introduction**

PHIL 403 and PHIL 404 should be carried out under the supervision of a PHIL faculty member (in the sequel, the supervisor). There is a jury composed of the supervisor and two other Bilkent University faculty members (in the sequel, jury members).

Since PHIL 403 is a prerequisite for PHIL 404, a non-failing grade from PHIL 403 is needed in order to take PHIL 404.

It is the expectation of the department that students propose their *own* topic – a philosophically interesting and meaningful problem they want to work on.<sup>1</sup> Originality is vital but it is also required that the proposed topic makes contact with the research agenda in contemporary (analytic) philosophy or the arguments presented in classic texts in the history of philosophy.

Faculty members may also provide – either by posting on their web pages or office doors – a list of suggested topics. Normally, these lists will be available during the registration period of the Fall semester.

Throughout PHIL 403 and PHIL 404, students use the Moodle program to make electronic submissions.

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<sup>1</sup> Establishing earlier contacts and arranging informal meetings in advance with a faculty member (the would-be supervisor) are useful. It should also be noted that some faculty may not wish to supervise senior theses on a given academic year due to other, more pressing commitments.

## **Nature and Scope**

The senior thesis will be the product of independent and critical research. Therefore, the thesis should not be purely expository. Given the aspirations of the Department and the overall research emphasis of Bilkent University, it is expected that a number of senior theses will in due course be published in philosophy journals.<sup>2</sup>

Length: 8,000-10,000 words.<sup>3</sup> Less than the lower limit, but only if the jury permits. *The upper limit is non-negotiable.*

Within those word count parameters, it is essential that the student (i) clarify and evaluate the various argumentative positions that the thesis is focused on, and (ii) develop the overall argumentative thrust of the thesis. Clarity and rigor are thus of foremost importance.

## **Supervisor**

The supervisor, a fulltime PHIL faculty member, is responsible for guiding the student's research and writing, as well as ensuring that the student prepares work of a sufficient standard. Supervisors are expected to hold regular meetings with their students in order to make sure that things are under control.

## **Jury**

Two other Bilkent faculty members, in addition to the supervisor.

The supervisor is the administrative head of the jury. He/she has the sole responsibility to make sure that jury meetings and evaluations are held in a timely manner and that the paperwork is flawless. It is the supervisor's job to submit the meeting forms (see APPENDIX A) and the grading forms (see APPENDIX C) to the department secretary in hardcopy.

The same jury will be active throughout the lifetime of a given senior thesis. In unusual circumstances and with the counsel of the Senior Thesis Committee, the department chair may change the supervisor or other jury members.

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<sup>2</sup> See *The Dualist* (Stanford's Undergraduate Journal of Philosophy) at <http://philosophy.stanford.edu/departamental-information/undergraduate-program/the-dualist-undergraduate-journal/> for a good example.

<sup>3</sup> Abstract, footnotes, acknowledgments, and appendices *included*. Title page, figures, tables, and references *excluded*.

For practical reasons, the best jury for a given senior thesis is composed of *three PHIL faculty*.

### **Mechanics**

Once a faculty member agrees to supervise a student, the student emails his/her supervisor a list of *four* suggested names for other jury members. The list must be submitted by the end of Week 3 (**25 September 2015**) of the Fall semester.

Benefiting from this list but in the end using his/her *own* initiative, the supervisor allocates a jury by the end of Week 4 (**2 October 2015**) of the Fall semester and submits the completed form in APPENDIX B (with jury signatures) to the department secretary. The student and the jury members are then given a copy of the approved form (signed by the department chair).

If a student cannot, by the end of Week 4 (**2 October 2015**) of the Fall semester, find a supervisor willing to take charge of him/her, the department chair will assign a supervisor and a jury, after consulting with the Senior Thesis Committee.

### **Submissions**

Each submission should be uploaded by the student to Moodle *one week* prior to the deadlines specified in the sequel. Following a submission, the supervisor may demand a resubmission from the student. In this case, new copies must be uploaded to Moodle within at most *three days* from the date of notification by the supervisor.

### **Duties of the Jury**

A jury cannot meet unless all three members are present. Meetings are held in a room, and not via teleconferencing or similar means.

A student cannot be present at the meeting of his/her jury, *unless* he/she is specifically requested by the supervisor to do so. If they are requested to attend, they might be asked specific questions about their work. The supervisor can always instruct the student to leave the room at some point.

In the following, ‘evaluation’ refers to the process which leads to the filling out of the form found in APPENDIX A. During the entire course of a senior thesis (PHIL 403 plus PHIL 404), this form is submitted a total of **five** times.

Not all evaluations of a student’s submissions require a meeting. Thus, there are only **three** meetings of a jury during the entire course of the thesis.

At the end of each evaluation, the jury must clearly spell out the additional work that the student should produce until the next deadline. The supervisor should then communicate the jury's message to the student.

If a jury member is to be away (say, on conference leave) then arrangements should be made by the supervisor to ensure that the jury is able to meet *before* the deadlines listed below (and as late as possible).

If a jury member suddenly becomes unavailable (say, due to illness) then arrangements should be made by the supervisor to ensure that the jury is able to meet *after* the deadlines listed below (and as early as possible).

At the end of each evaluation (with or without a meeting), the members complete (and put their initials, rather than sign) a form (see APPENDIX A) which is then uploaded to Moodle by the supervisor.

## **Deadlines**

### **Fall semester (PHIL 403)**

Jury **meets** by the end of Week 6 (**16 October 2015**) to **evaluate** the *proposal* (500-1,000 words) submitted by the student. This is an analysis of the specific topic that the student wishes to write the thesis on.

Jury **evaluates** by the end of Week 11 (**20 November 2015**) the *first substantial piece of writing* (3,000-4,000 words) submitted by the student. The document should include an adequate literature survey.

Jury **meets** by the end of Week 15 (**18 December 2015**) to **evaluate** the *revised and expanded version of the preceding* submitted by the student. This is the last document for this semester. If a student fails to make this submission, he/she receives an **FX**.

Jury allocates a grade for PHIL 403 by the last day (**11 January 2016**) for submission of course grades.

### **Spring semester (PHIL 404)**

Jury **evaluates** by the end of Week 6 (**4 March 2016**) the *first complete draft* submitted by the student.

Jury **meets** by the end of Week 13 (**22 April 2016**) to **evaluate** the *final draft* submitted by the student. If a student fails to make this submission, he/she receives an **FX**.

Submission of the final version by the last day of classes (3 May 2016). After that date, the thesis may not be modified, unless express prior authorization is obtained from the supervisor. The final document must fulfill the style requirements listed below.<sup>4</sup>

*Compulsory* public presentation of the thesis to the jury and the interested Bilkent faculty and students during the final exams period (5-14 May 2016): a 20-minute presentation, followed by a 10-minute discussion session.<sup>5</sup> The following items should be kept in mind:

- It is strongly recommended that you provide the audience with a one-page handout (i.e., brief sketch of the issue/problem the thesis is concerned with, your argumentative position, central steps in the argument, and so on). Alternatively, you could use the computer/projector in the presentation room. (However, if you intend to do so double-check to ensure that there are no technical problems before your session begins.)
- In all cases consult with your supervisor during the preparation of your presentation and show him/her your handout or presentation slides in advance of your presentation.
- For the benefit of the audience it is also strongly recommended that you avoid reading from a script.
- Time your presentation so to ensure that sufficient time is left for discussion.

Following the presentation, a student submits in a plastic folder a highly legible and unstapled *hardcopy* of the final version of his/her thesis to the department secretary (18 May 2016). This is the archival copy that'll be stored in the department. (It is also the only hardcopy a student ever submits during the lifetime of his/her project, all other submissions having been made via Moodle.)

Jury allocates a grade for PHIL 404 by the last day (18 May 2016) for submission of course grades.

## Style

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<sup>4</sup> The final version may be found unacceptable by the Senior Thesis Committee on the grounds that it does not conform to the style guidelines. In this case, the student will be given *three* days for revise-and-resubmit.

<sup>5</sup> The chair of the Senior Thesis Committee arranges the date and time of the presentations and notifies the department secretary with this information so that a room can be arranged.

The formatting requirements of *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* must be **strictly** obeyed. A style sheet is available online at

[http://www.aristoteliansociety.org.uk/pdf/style\\_sheet.pdf](http://www.aristoteliansociety.org.uk/pdf/style_sheet.pdf)

Students must make every effort to produce documents that are free of spelling/grammar mistakes and that accord **exactly** with the requirements specified in this style sheet. No letter grade will be assigned until the jury members, the Senior Thesis Committee, and the chair of the department are all satisfied with a document.

In addition, the thesis must

- Be typed (no color)
- Use a clear (not fancy) font
- Have wide (at least 1 inch) left, right, top, and bottom margins
- Be double-spaced throughout (including the footnotes, appendices, and references)
- Be numbered (bottom of the page, center)
- Be spell-checked (using either British or American spelling throughout)
- Include a title page which has the Bilkent logo, department name, thesis title, student's name, names/academic titles/departments of supervisor and other jury members, academic year, and date submitted (*in that order*)
- Include a separate page with an abstract of 200-300 words, stating at the bottom of this page the word count for the entire document (normally, a number in the range 8,000-10,000)

*Note:* Every reference cited in the thesis must also be present in the reference list (and vice versa).

## **Grading**

In assigning a grade (for PHIL 403 or PHIL 404), the jury takes into account *written* work. There is a single exception to this. The presentation at the end of PHIL 404 is compulsory, and *depending on the jury's judgment*, it may contribute towards the grade of the student. This contribution can be as high as 25% of the final grade for PHIL 404.

The letter grade allocated by the jury at the end of each semester will be based on a consensus among jury members. In other words, the jury will assign the grade collectively. **A+** and **FZ** can be awarded under no circumstances. If one or more jury members think that the student should receive an incomplete (**I**),

then the student receives an **I**. In this case, the Bilkent academic regulations are in effect.<sup>6</sup>

The letter grade is communicated, by the last day for submission of course grades, to the department secretary using the form in APPENDIX C.

### **Penalty for Late Submissions**

If a student misses one or more of the deadlines listed above, the jury will penalize the student in any which way it sees fit, by discounting the overall semester grade for each deadline missed. Each jury might have a different rule for such penalizing. Therefore students should inquire with jury members in the beginning of a thesis to learn the applicable policy.

### **Plagiarism**

Bilkent University's guidelines on academic honesty will be strictly enforced. Students are urged to familiarize themselves with the rules at

<http://www.provost.bilkent.edu.tr/procedures/AcademicHonesty.htm>

(There is also a Turkish version at that address.)

### **Complications re Grading**

If the jury cannot reach a consensus (i.e., one or more members dissenting) then the letter grade will have to be computed with the table below in mind:

- The supervisor assigns an integer in the range **0-50** and privately submits it to the department secretary.
- Other jury members each assign an integer in the range **0-25** and privately submit it to the department secretary.
- The secretary adds these numbers to retrieve a grade from the table. The secretary then enters this grade to the form in APPENDIX C and circulates it among jury members for signing.

<i>Range</i>	<i>Grade</i>
<b>90-100</b>	<b>A</b>
<b>85-89</b>	<b>A-</b>
<b>80-84</b>	<b>B+</b>
<b>75-79</b>	<b>B</b>
<b>70-74</b>	<b>B-</b>

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<sup>6</sup> Consult the link <http://catalog.bilkent.edu.tr/current/general/grading.html> for **I** grades; it is not the usual yada yada.

<b>65-69</b>	<b>C+</b>
<b>60-64</b>	<b>C</b>
<b>55-59</b>	<b>C-</b>
<b>50-54</b>	<b>D+</b>
<b>40-49</b>	<b>D</b>
<b>0-39</b>	<b>F/FX</b>



**APPENDIX A**

**Bilkent University  
Department of Philosophy**

**SENIOR THESIS MEETING FORM**

*Course (circle applicable course code):*      PHIL 403                      PHIL 404

*Student:*

.....

*Date:*

.....

We the undersigned confirm that a senior thesis meeting concerning the above student was held on the above date. The supervisor has been asked to inform the student of our recommendations.

*Supervisor:*

.....

(name and initials)

*Other Jury Members:*

*1*

.....

(name and initials)

*2*

.....

(name and initials)

**APPENDIX B**

**Bilkent University  
Department of Philosophy**

**SENIOR THESIS JURY FORM**

*Student:*

.....

*Date:*

.....

This is to affirm that the senior thesis jury of the above student for the courses PHIL 403 and PHIL 404 has been formed as follows.

*Department Chair:*

.....

(name and signature)

*Jury Members:*

*1* (Supervisor)

.....

(name and signature)

*2*

.....

(name and signature)

*3*

.....

(name and signature)

**APPENDIX C**

**Bilkent University  
Department of Philosophy**

**SENIOR THESIS GRADE FORM**

*Course (circle applicable course code):*      PHIL 403                      PHIL 404

*Student:*  
.....

*Date:*  
.....

We the undersigned affirm that the senior thesis grade of the above student is (circle applicable grade<sup>7</sup>):

**A   A-   B+   B   B-   C+   C   C-   D+   D   F   FX   I**

*Supervisor:*  
.....  
(name and signature)

*Other Jury Members:*  
  
*1*  
.....  
(name and signature)

*2*  
.....  
(name and signature)

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<sup>7</sup> In case of an **I**, the supervisor should specify, with a handwritten note on this form, the date on which the student should submit the completed work to the jury. (Consult the link <http://catalog.bilkent.edu.tr/current/general/grading.html> for an **I**.)