



Bilkent University

Department of Philosophy

Senior Thesis I and Senior Thesis II

(PHIL 403 & PHIL 404)

GUIDELINES

(Version of 5 February 2024)

Introduction

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

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.

It is the expectation of the department that students propose their *own* topic – a philosophically interesting and meaningful problem they want to work on. 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.

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

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 (see *The Dualist* for a good example).

Length: 8,000-10,000 words (abstract, footnotes, acknowledgments, and appendices *included*, but the title page, figures, tables, quotations, and references *excluded*). Lesser length is allowed, 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 utmost importance.

Supervisor and jury

The supervisor, a full-time 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.

The jury consists of two Bilkent faculty members, in addition to the supervisor.

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

The same jury will normally 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. 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 (**18 February 2024**).

Benefiting from this list but ultimately using his/her *own* initiative, the supervisor allocates a jury by the end of Week 4 (**25 February 2024**) 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 (**25 February 2024**), 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

During the entire course of a senior thesis (PHIL 403 plus PHIL 404), the jury holds in total **three** meetings: to approve the proposal and to assign the grades for PHIL 403 and PHIL 404. Following each meeting, the members of the jury complete a form (see APPENDIX A) which is then submitted to the department secretary. All of this is to be done electronically.

If a jury member is to be away, 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).

Deadlines

PHIL 403

Submission 1: The student submits his/her *proposal* by the end of Week 6 (17 March 2024). The proposal is a piece of writing (800-1,000 words) containing an analysis of the specific topic that the student wishes to write the thesis on. **See the document Writing Guidelines for more details.**

In the course of Week 7 (18 March–24 March 2024) a poster session will be organized by the Department in which each Senior Thesis candidate will present his/her proposal. The session will be done in-class. *The failure to present the proposal will result in an FX grade.*

Following the poster session, the jury **meets** by the end of Week 7 (24 March 2024) to **evaluate** the proposal.

Submission 2: The student submits by the end of Week 11 (28 April 2024) the *first substantial piece of writing* (3,000-4,000 words). The document should include an adequate literature survey.

The supervisor **evaluates** Submission 2 by the end of Week 12 (5 May 2024).

Submission 3: The student submits by the end of Week 14 (17 May 2024) an *expanded version* of the Submission 2.

Jury **meets** by 1 June 2024 to evaluate Submission 3. 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 (5 June 2024) for submission of course grades.

PHIL 404

Submission 1: The student submits by the end of Week 6 (17 March 2024) the *first complete draft*.

The supervisor **evaluates** by the end of Week 7 (24 March 2024) Submission 1.

Submission 2: The student submits by the end of Week 12 (5 May 2024) the *final draft*.

Jury **meets** by the end of Week 13 (12 May 2024) to evaluate Submission 2. If a student fails to make this submission, he/she receives an **FX**.

Submission 3: The student submits by the last day of classes (17 May 2024) the *final version*. After that date, the thesis may not be modified, unless express prior authorization is obtained from the supervisor.

Submission 3 must fulfill the style requirements listed below. If the final version is found unacceptable by the Senior Thesis Committee on the grounds that it does not conform to the style guidelines, the student will be given *three* days for revise-and-resubmit.

Compulsory public presentation of the thesis to the jury and the interested Bilkent faculty and students during the final exams period (20 May 2024–1 June 2024): a 20-minute presentation, followed by a 10-minute discussion session. The following items should be kept in mind:

- It is strongly recommended that you provide the audience with a one-page handout (i.e., a 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 as to ensure that sufficient time is left for discussion.

Following the presentation, a student emails to the department secretary the final version of the thesis in a PDF file (**not** MS Word or any other format) by **1 June 2024**. This is the archival copy that'll be stored by the department.

Jury allocates a grade for PHIL 404 by the last day (**5 June 2024**) for submission of course grades.

Style

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

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 that page the word count for the entire document (normally, a number in the range 8,000-10,000)
- Have every reference cited be also 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 (see <http://catalog.bilkent.edu.tr/current/general/grading.html> for **I** grades).

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.

Range	Grade
90-100	A
85-89	A-
80-84	B+
75-79	B
70-74	B-

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

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:

.....

(name and initials)

.....

(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:

(Supervisor)

.....

(name and signature)

.....

(name and signature)

.....

(name and signature)

APPENDIX C

Bilkent University
Department of Philosophy

SENIOR THESIS GRADE FORM

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

Student:

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Date:

.....

We the undersigned affirm that the senior thesis grade of the above student is
(circle applicable grade):

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

Supervisor:

.....

(name and signature)

Other Jury Members:

.....

(name and signature)

.....

(name and signature)

Note: 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**.)