

# Admissions FAQ for Prospective Graduate Students

University of Toronto, Department of Philosophy

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## General Inquiries

General information on admission requirements for philosophy graduate programs.

Thank you for your interest. You might want to take a look at our admissions page for a first sense of what it takes to apply to the Department of Philosophy at U of T. Most importantly, you must have sufficient undergraduate background in Philosophy, the equivalent of an undergraduate specialization, or MA degree in philosophy. You can find more information here: <https://philosophy.utoronto.ca/st-george/graduate/admission/>.

You should not approach individual faculty, asking them to be your supervisor, as that is not how admissions work in the Department of Philosophy at the University of Toronto. Potential supervisors are only approached after all course work is done.

How do I find a supervisor for my PhD? Do I need to find one before I apply?

Do not reach out to faculty members privately to inquire about supervision. Supervisors are not selected until coursework is complete.

Will it matter that I CR/NCR philosophy courses outside my research area?

No, this won't matter.

What grades do I need?

We look for As and A+s in philosophy courses. For the direct entry PhD we would want the average for your most recent two years of philosophy courses to be close to an A. Having said that, we'd rather you got a C in a philosophy course and then lots of straight As or A+s than a mixture of As and A-s that might lead to a slightly higher GPA.

Does it matter if I have a philosophy major or philosophy specialist undergraduate degree?

It will make no difference to the admissions committee; they will look at a breakdown of the courses taken and grades.

I did not major in philosophy during my undergrad. Am I eligible to apply?

We are looking for the 'equivalent' of a philosophy major. If you have taken lots of philosophy courses (and related subjects in religion and perhaps political theory or women's and gender studies), and you have covered a range of areas of contemporary problems in philosophy (eg. some philosophy of mind or language or logic and some philosophy of science or epistemology or metaphysics) and have covered several different periods of the history of philosophy, that would be good enough for us. In other words, if your coursework demonstrates a thorough background in philosophy but you did not formally major or specialize in philosophy, consider yourself eligible.

I have not taken many philosophy courses / do not have recent letters of reference.

You would be at a significant disadvantage in applying to our graduate programs if you do not have the equivalent of an undergraduate major in philosophy and if you cannot supply recent letters from professors of philosophy. Our programs are extremely competitive and I would not want you to spend money on an application fee in these circumstances if the \$125 fee would be a hardship for you. Some students who are interested in exploring graduate study in philosophy in circumstances like yours enrol as visiting undergraduate students and take upper level philosophy courses. This provides recent information about their philosophical work and can provide sources of letters of reference. It is also a relatively inexpensive option and can be pursued part-time.

Can I apply to both the MA and the PhD?

Yes, you can. It is perfectly acceptable to apply to both. In fact, if you are a domestic student who applies to our direct entry PhD we would automatically consider you for the MA if we do not accept you into the PhD. If you are an international student, you should probably apply only for the PhD as we only rarely accept international MA students. Rather than submit two applications, you can submit one and indicate in your Statement of Interest that you are willing to be considered for both programs.

I am currently enrolled in a PhD program elsewhere. Can I transfer to UofT?

All students must go through the application process to be admitted into one of our graduate programs, even if they are currently in a PhD program elsewhere. If you are admitted, SGS will allow 1 FCE of courses taken at a prior institution to count towards your degree, so long as they have not been used for credit in a previous program. To transfer credits from another institution, graduate students should fill out the Transfer Credit form found on the SGS website.

I am a mature student. Are there different application requirements for me?

No, we do not have special rules for mature students. The application process and criteria are the same.

Could I defer my acceptance to the following year?

While you should not apply this year if you think it is *unlikely* you would join us in September it is indeed possible to defer.

## Application Documents

Do I need an official transcript when I apply?

No. At the time of initial application an unofficial transcript is sufficient.

What should I include in my statement of interest/writing sample?

The statement of interest is a short opportunity to let us know (1) which areas of philosophy you interested in, (2) why U of T Philosophy might be a good fit with you (here you might mention a few relevant faculty but need not) and (3) mention any special considerations or issues we should know about.

As for the writing sample, that's incredibly important and I have a video for prospective students posted on our web page that discusses it.

How long should the writing sample be?

The writing sample should be approximately 20 pages double spaced excluding notes and bibliography, size 12 font. The shorter length requirement is intended to allow us to more fairly compare students directly out of BAs (who can apply for the direct entry PhD) with those coming from MAs). It is also intended to limit the workload of faculty on our admission committee.

Can I submit a writing sample longer than 20 pp?

Slightly longer is acceptable – although it is always a good idea to edit one's work for brevity!

How many reference letters can I include?

We prefer 3 but won't disregard a fourth. Two is acceptable.

What if it will be hard for me to get three letters from academic philosophers?

If you are able to provide 3 academic references where 1 is not in the area of philosophy, this is not ideal but will not prevent you from being considered. Not having any academic references from philosophers puts you at a significant disadvantage for our program. An option is to enrol as a visiting undergraduate student and take upper year philosophy courses. This option is relatively inexpensive, can be pursued part-time, and would provide recent information about your philosophical work and can provide sources for letters of reference.

## English Proficiency tests

General Info: The School of Graduate Studies' Language Requirements

The School of Graduate Studies (SGS) determines [English language proficiency requirements](#). [They are outlined here](#). The philosophy department does not have additional English language proficiency requirements. Please direct further inquiries here: [admissions.sgs@utoronto.ca](mailto:admissions.sgs@utoronto.ca)

Can I send my language test results after the deadline for applications?

Yes, so long as the results are available to the committee before we make our decision. The earliest this could possibly be is February 1<sup>st</sup>.

I am an international student currently studying/recently graduated from a BA or MA program where the language of instruction is English. Do I need to submit my English language proficiency exam?

Under these circumstances the English Proficiency Testing requirement is not required.

My language proficiency test will have been taken less than two years ago at the time I submit my application, but it will be more than two years by the application deadline. Can I use this test?

Yes, you can. The test needs to be less than two years old at the time of your application.

## MA Program

How competitive is your program? How many are admitted?

The MA program only admits 15 students each year and is very competitive.

I am an international student interested in the MA program.

You should know that we very rarely admit international students to our MA program.

Do I need a humanities background for the Philosophy of Science MA?

An undergraduate education in the humanities is not expected for the Philosophy of Science concentration. You might want to take a look at our admissions page for a first sense of what it takes to apply to the Department of Philosophy at U of T. You can find it here: <https://philosophy.utoronto.ca/st-george/graduate/admission/>.

What can I do with an MA in philosophy?

Approximately 1/3 of our MA students go on to law school, 1/3 to PhD programs, and the rest go elsewhere. You can see information about Placement for our PhD students on our website [here](#). We have better tracking of that group.

Is it possible to do the MA program part-time?

The part-time MA is intended to be flexible but is hardly ever pursued so I can't tell you what a **typical** pathway would look like. Part-time enrolment in the MA program is permitted, in which case the requirements for the degree must be completed within five academic years.

You should look at the overall MA program requirements and know that we'd recommend you take the two MA proseminars in your first year (at a minimum one of them) along with the (low workload) MA professional development seminar. In case it is important to you, you should know that, if you were accepted, you would probably be the only person taking their MA part-time. You should also know, if you are not a domestic student, that we hardly ever accept international students into our MA. The application process is exactly the same as for all our other graduate programs. Information about it is posted here.

<https://philosophy.utoronto.ca/st-george/graduate/admission/>