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| **Criterion** | **Meets Expectations** | **Does Not Meet Expectations** | **Additional Comments** |
| Mastery of the field or problem area | * Adequate statement of thesis * Coherent and clear arguments * Clear objectives * Understanding of subject matter | * Inadequate statement of thesis * Flawed or incoherent arguments * Poorly defined objectives * Limited understanding of subject matter |  |
| Mastery of the secondary literature | * Adequate understanding of the literature * Adequate use of the literature * Adequate documentation of the literature | * Limited understanding of the literature * Limited use of the literature * Limited documentation of the literature |  |
| Mastery of methods of inquiry | * Focused project * Well-organized project * Reasonable plan for analysis and development of ideas | * Not a focused project * Poorly organized project * Confused or ineffective plan for analysis and development of ideas |  |
| Originality and potential for contribution to discipline | * Potential for originality * Potential for theoretical or applied significance | * Originality not demonstrated * Limited theoretical or applied significance |  |

**MA Thesis/Paper Rubric**

**MA Thesis and MA Paper Defense Guidelines**

The information below provides general guidelines for reviewing and making recommendations for the MA Thesis and MA Paper. Instructions for submitting the paperwork for the MA Thesis and MA Paper can be found in section 3.5 of the Philosophy Graduate Handbook. A detailed overview of how to conduct the MA Thesis and MA Paper can be found in sections 5.1 and 5.2 of the Philosophy Graduate Handbook.

**Before the Oral Defense**

The completed MA thesis or paper should be sent to the committee no less than two weeks prior to the defense. *5 days prior to the defense*, committee members must indicate whether the MA thesis or Ma paper is ready for the defense. To this end, the committee should email the committee chair (but not the student) indicating one of the following:

1. Green Light: There are no serious structural or content-related problems that would prevent a successful defense. The committee member indicates with this recommendation that they believe it is reasonable to proceed with the defense. This does not guarantee a pass. The student must demonstrate in the oral defense that they have mastery of the philosophical problem they are addressing, the material they are engaging, and the argument they are advancing. A green light merely indicates there are no red flags in the written work.
2. Yellow Light: The written work has several structural or content-related problems that may need to be addressed before the oral defense. The committee member indicates with this recommendation that they have reservations about the project but that it can still receive passing marks if the student’s performance in the oral defense is strong and adequately addresses these issues. The committee member must clearly articulate in their email to the advisor why they have reservations that warrant this recommendation.
3. Red Light: The written work has several significant structural or content-related problems that suggest it is not ready to be defended. The committee member indicates with this recommendation that regardless of how the oral defense goes, it is unlikely that the student will pass the defense.

**Note:** The decision to proceed with the defense is ultimately up to the advisor and the student. However, if the advisor receives a significant number of yellow and red-light responses from the committee, delaying the defense to address these issues is strongly recommended.

**Oral Defense Recommendations**

For additional information about how the MA Thesis and Paper is conducted, see the Graduate Handbook, sections 5.1 and 5.2 respectively.

1. Pass: The student has met the criteria of the MA thesis defense rubric and answered questions in the oral defense in a way that demonstrates mastery of the philosophical problem they are addressing, the scholarship they are engaging, and the argument they have advanced. A recommendation of pass depends on all committee members concurring with this judgment. Upon receiving a recommendation of pass and completing the necessary paperwork, the student will have completed all requirements for the MA degree.
   1. Pass with Distinction: The committee may award “distinction” to designate outstanding work on both the written text and oral defense; this designation should only be made on rare occasions of truly exceptional work. For the MA thesis and paper, distinction should be considered in light of the metrics associated with MA level research. Factors at this stage may include the level of improvement a student has shown in addition to preparing a thesis or paper that meets the standards of scholarly excellence in their field. Each committee member should be able to explain why this mark of distinction is warranted and the vote for distinction must be unanimous. In the case of the MA Thesis, this designation is treated as an honor that will appear on the student’s transcript. In the case of the MA Paper, this designation will be recorded by the department, but it will not appear on the student’s transcript, nor will it be recorded by the Graduate School.
2. Conditional Pass: The committee agrees that the written work requires several additional revisions, and a pass is contingent upon the student making those revisions.
   1. Revisions: Upon completing the oral defense and receiving feedback from the committee, students who receive a conditional pass should complete the necessary revisions as soon as possible. The MA advisor will determine whether the revised thesis or paper has met the committee's expectations and may ask that the committee to review the revised written work before final submission. If the revisions are completed quickly, students may still be able to meet the deadlines for graduating in the semester of the original defense. Students must submit final copies of the thesis or paper with approved revisions within one semester of a successful defense (e.g., if a student’s defense falls within a Fall semester, their final copies must meet the Spring semester submission deadlines). After one full semester, a student may be discontinued and be required to apply for reinstatement.
3. Non-pass: The thesis falls short of many of the criteria on the rubric and the oral defense demonstrates that the student lacks mastery of the philosophical problem they are addressing, the scholarship they are engaging, and the argument they are advancing. In these cases, the student must make significant revisions or write a new thesis or paper. Though many steps are taken in advance of the defense to avoid this outcome, it is possible. In these cases, students will not have met the requirements for earning the degree. They may be discontinued from the program and required to apply for reinstatement.