

About the Philosophy Honours Thesis (Updated: 1 October 2024)

An honours thesis in philosophy is an independent research project conducted by a philosophy major in his or her last two semesters of study at the University, under the supervision of a faculty member of the Philosophy Department. The honours thesis can be written on any philosophical topic for which the student can find a member of the Department willing to serve as supervisor. The thesis must not be merely a lengthy term paper, but should make an original contribution to some significant philosophical debate.

Beginning from AY2011/2012, the honours thesis will be a year-long module. It should commence in Semester 1, and end in Semester 2 of any typical academic year. Please seek approval from the department for any deviation from this timeline. Students will receive an 'IP' grade at the end of Semester 1 and a final mark at the end of Semester 2. The final mark will include a portion (30%) that is based on the supervisor's continuing assessment from Semester 1. The remaining portion (70%) is based on the examiners' evaluations of the thesis.

Pre-requisites and preclusions

In order to write an honours thesis in philosophy, you must register for PH4401/PH4401HM. Registration is done manually through the Philosophy Department; to register, approach our administrators in the Philosophy Department main office.

At the time of registration, you must meet the following requirements:

PH4401 (Cohort 2021 and onwards):

Completed 110 units including 40 units of PH major requirements with minimum GPA of 3.50.

PH4401HM (Cohort 2016 to 2020):

Completed 110 units including 44 units of PH major requirements with a minimum of GPA of 3.50.

Units

You will earn 8 units for competing PH4401 and 15 units for PH4401HM

All Cohorts: You must not have done an Independent Study course (ISc)

The last point bears repeating: the ISc is a **preclusion** for PH4401/PH4401HM: if you do an ISc, you *cannot* write an honours thesis.

Before You Start

The decision to write an honours thesis in philosophy should not be made lightly. The thesis represents two semesters of intensive

and self-motivated research and writing. You should have a clear idea of what you want to write your thesis about *before* you begin your final year of study. If you find yourself struggling to come up with a topic that gets you excited, this may be a sign that you would be better off not attempting an honours thesis.

Before you begin your final year of studies, you should make informal arrangements with a member of the Philosophy Department faculty to serve as your thesis supervisor. Ideally, your supervisor should have some expertise on the topic about which you plan to write. Bear in mind that you cannot write a thesis without a supervisor, and that no member of the Department is obligated to serve as your supervisor. Since a faculty member may receive more requests to supervise theses than he or she can accommodate, it is imperative that you seek out a supervisor as early as possible.

First Semester

As stated above, by the time you begin the first semester of your final year of study, you should already have chosen a topic and made informal arrangements with a member of the Department to serve as your thesis supervisor. During this semester, you should be doing extensive background reading on the topic of your thesis, including any readings recommended by your supervisor. You should meet with your supervisor regularly, according to a schedule that the two of you agree upon in advance. By the end of this semester, you should have the core sections or chapters of your thesis written up in rough draft form. If you have not begun the writing process by the end of the first semester, you are unlikely to end up with a high-quality thesis when all is said and done.

You are required to do a presentation in the Philosophy Meeting Room at the end of your first semester of doing the honours thesis, and attendance is open to any member of the Philosophy Department (lecturers as well as other students). You will have fifteen minutes for the presentation, followed by a fifteen-minute question and answer session.

Second Semester

This will be a writing-intensive semester, in which you revise, expand, and polish the rough draft that you should have completed by the end of the previous term.

Format, submission and evaluation

The honours thesis has a maximum word limit of 12,000 words for PH4401HM. There is no minimum length. For PH4401, the word count should be between 8,000 to 10,000 words. The word count will include footnotes, but not bibliography. Any citation style is acceptable, as long as it is clear and applied uniformly throughout the thesis.

The thesis should be double-spaced in a standard font (such as 12 pt Times New Roman), and printed single-sided with wide margins (at least 1 inch) all around. The pages that make up the body of the thesis must be numbered consecutively throughout.

The first page of the thesis should contain the following information:

[Title]

[Author's Name]

Honours Thesis presented to the Department of Philosophy, National University
of Singapore (Session 20[]/20[])

You must upload your honours thesis in PDF format in the CANVAS workbin for PH4401/PH4401HM. The file name should be your full name as given in the NUS system, and in all capitals. Your thesis is considered submitted only upon completion of uploading in CANVAS by 5pm of the given deadline. The deadline for submission falls around the end of the semester; the exact submission deadlines are announced in advance by the Philosophy Honours Coordinator.

An honours thesis is evaluated by the thesis writer's supervisor and one other member of the Philosophy Department (nominated by the Philosophy Honours Coordinator). The final mark for the thesis is the average of the two marks recommended by these evaluators.