

## **Expectations for PhD thesis supervision**

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Because there have been times when I've been asked to direct more dissertations than I can reasonably agree to, and because I want to help those whose dissertations I do direct to be as competitive as possible on the job market, I've come up with the following list of expectations for students who are considering asking me to supervise their PhD thesis:

### Dissertation topic and student promise

1. In terms of PhD thesis supervision, my first priority is to students working on a topic in medieval philosophy in the Latin west. For the same reason, I expect students who want to work with me to choose a promising topic in this area and to show considerable promise themselves (based in part on prior coursework and exams) for completing a dissertation on such a topic.

### Language training

2. In order to be competitive on the job market in medieval philosophy, you must know Latin. For the same reason, I expect my students to be competent in Latin by the time they finish their coursework, and ideally sooner.
3. Also important for competitiveness on the job market in medieval philosophy is a letter from your supervisor that speaks directly to your competence in Latin. For this reason, I help to run a weekly medieval Latin reading group and expect my students to begin attending it as soon as they are competent in Latin—again, at least by the time they finish their coursework, and ideally sooner.

### Coursework

4. Because medieval philosophy covers such a large period in the history of philosophy (over a thousand years), and is in many ways less familiar than the neighboring fields of ancient and early modern philosophy, it is important for you to have a solid background in some of the central texts, figures, and themes of this period before beginning work on a specific topic. For the same reason, I expect my students to take, and do well in, at least one of my courses in medieval philosophy prior to working on their dissertation. (If I do not offer a graduate seminar during the years of your coursework, you can always take one of my medieval undergraduate courses for graduate credit.)
5. In order to be competitive on the job market in medieval philosophy, you must not only have some general knowledge of the period but also be prepared to talk (in an interview situation) about how you would approach teaching an introductory medieval philosophy course. For the same reason, I expect my students, at some point in their graduate career, to audit my undergraduate survey of medieval philosophy.

### Productivity

6. To be competitive on the job market in any field, you must finish your dissertation in a timely manner. For the same reason, once I've agreed to direct a dissertation (beginning at the prospectus stage), I expect receive drafts of dissertation-related material (i.e., prospectus drafts or drafts of dissertation chapters) on a regular basis—where by this I mean every 8-10 weeks (12 weeks at the latest). (Note: at 12 weeks per chapter, it will take you a year to produce a draft of even a short, 4 chapter dissertation, not including prospectus or revisions.) Students who aren't confident that they can meet this expectation for productivity should seriously reconsider asking me to be their supervisor.