Department of Philosophy

Plan: Scholarly Ethics and Integrity in Graduate Education

In response to Resolution 2012-13B, the Philosophy Department proposes the following:

1. We will mandate that all students in our M.A. program participate in ethics and integrity activities (EIA), covering the following five topics (four of which are required by the resolution):

i) Plagiarism and other violations of the Graduate Honor Code;

ii) Proper use of professional conventions in citation of existing scholarship, accurate reporting and ownership of findings, and acknowledgment of contributions to the work;

iii) Ethical standards in teaching, mentoring, and professional activities;

iv) Available avenues for reporting alleged misconduct; and

v) Fair use of publications under copyright law

1.1 At present, the philosophy department runs a series of talks on alternate Wednesdays in the fall semester, known as the 'brown bag series.' (As the name indicates, they usually take place during lunch, one of the few times we can be sure all of our graduate students can attend.) These sessions are aimed primarily at first-year M.A. students, though all students and faculty are welcome to attend. While there is no separate rubric for this series, we consider it mandatory for students to get credit for the 3 or more Project and Report hours they carry in their first semester.

At these sessions, faculty give a brief presentation, with most of the time allotted for discussion.

The brown bag series varies in content, but always includes talks on:
-How to do research (including avoiding plagiarism, how to cite properly, and so on)
-Becoming a professional (how to conduct oneself as a member of the profession)
-Guidance on applications to Ph.D. programs

We propose to retain this content but augment it in the following ways:
-Devote separate sessions to each of the five topics listed above in §1.1;
-Include time for break-out sessions, in which graduate students and faculty 'role play' various scenarios.

If a student is unable to attend one of these sessions, s/he will meet privately, with the Director of Graduate Studies and the faculty presenter, to cover the material.

2. We recognize that there must be some independent means of verifying that students have grasped this material, beyond their (required) attendance at these sessions. To that end, we will develop an exam, which all students must pass with a B or better in order to get credit for Project and Report. That exam will feature:

i) examples of adequate and inadequate citations; students must identify which is which, being sure to explain which constitute plagiarism, and on what grounds.

ii) examples of proper and improper footnote, endnote, and bibliographical entries. While our discipline, unlike such disciplines as psychology, has no single bibliographical convention, there are nevertheless essential pieces of information that any adequate reference will include.

iii) a series of scenarios, in which the student is asked to identify proper and improper behavior, and explain why each scenario falls into one category or the other

iv) a series of questions on fair use under copyright law.

v) Finally, the student will be asked to name appropriate venues for reporting misconduct.

This will be a two-hour exam, marked by the Director of Graduate Studies in consultation with the Graduate Committee. Students failing this exam will be compelled to attend the following fall's EIA in order to re-take the exam.

3. Our plan of study will be revised to make explicit our EIA requirement and when it is to be met. After a student passes the exam, the Director of Graduate Studies will inform the Graduate Coordinator, and that information will be entered on the student's program of study.

4. While this proposal covers all four mandatory topics and one of the optional ones, per the resolution, we have determined that the other topics are not applicable. For example, our students do not work in labs, apply for grants, or undertake the other activities listed. Finally, I should note that it is extraordinarily rare for a philosophy graduate student at the M.A. level to publish, and indeed we typically discourage students from attempting to do so. Moreover, co-authorship is quite rare, at any point in one's career. Nevertheless, issues pertaining to publishing and co-authorship will of course come up, as we move through the topics listed in §1.1 above.

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