

THE DISSERTATION (DOCTORAL THESIS)

The doctoral dissertation should (1) establish the student's ability to analyze, interpret, and synthesize information; (2) demonstrate the student's knowledge of the literature relating to the project or at least acknowledge prior scholarship on which the dissertation is built; (3) describe the methods and procedures used; (4) present results in a sequential and logical manner; (5) display the student's ability to discuss fully and coherently the meaning of the results. If an experimental problem, the work must be described in sufficient detail to permit an independent investigator to replicate the results; and (6) be original work.

In its most general sense, 'original' work describes research that has not been done previously or that creates new knowledge. Although a dissertation should not duplicate another researcher's or scholar's work, the topic, project, or approach taken need not be solely that of the graduate student. Students are encouraged to explore a particular topic or project with the idea that she or he will independently develop the 'thesis' of the dissertation. The student should be able to demonstrate what portion of the research or scholarship represents his or her own thinking.

The dissertation is the beginning of one's scholarly work, not its culmination. Dissertation research should provide students with hands-on directed experience in the primary research methods of the discipline, and should prepare students for the type of research/scholarship that will be expected of them after they receive the Ph.D. degree. Scholarly activity and research is encouraged from the outset of a student's graduate program.

(Adapted from *The Role and Nature of the Doctoral Dissertation*. Council of Graduate Schools Task Force, 1990)

Forming the Dissertation Committee

In preparing for the dissertation (or 'doctoral thesis'), the student (in consultation with his or her advisor) should identify faculty members who would serve on the Ph.D. dissertation committee. A Dissertation Committee is required for each student submitting a dissertation. The committee is responsible for advising the student's research, ensuring the quality of the dissertation, and conducting a final examination based on the dissertation. The Dissertation Committee should be appointed as early as possible and for as long as necessary to achieve these purposes.

Because the dissertation committee serves a key role in monitoring the quality of graduate student research and scholarship, enriches the academic experience of students, and increases communication among faculty and students, the department has adopted the following procedures to insure adequate size and academic diversity in doctoral dissertation committees:

1. The student, in consultation with the advisor, should identify at least 4 faculty members to serve on the Dissertation Committee. The committee should include at least 3 members of the HCD faculty who represent the breadth of departmental expertise, as well as at least 1 member from outside the department. Faculty with zero time appointments in HCD may be considered as either inside or outside faculty.

2. In accordance with Graduate College Requirements, at least 3 of the committee must be members of the Graduate College, and at least 2 must be tenured. [Students who passed preliminary exams before August 21, 1997 need only 1 tenured committee member]. The Graduate College's list of graduate faculty is now accessible at: http://www.grad.uiuc.edu/grad_faculty
3. The Graduate College requires the designation of a committee chair and a director of dissertation research (or 'research advisor'). The committee chair is responsible for the overall progress of the student, and chairs the preliminary and final exam proceedings. The research advisor provides guidance for the dissertation research. It is common that a single faculty member serves both roles: and is ordinarily the student's graduate advisor in our program, however, there are circumstances where different faculty might serve in these roles.
4. The chair of the committee must be a member of the Graduate Faculty and it is recommended that the committee chair and/or research advisor should be a department member.
5. A faculty member who resigns or retires is terminated from membership on the Graduate Faculty unless the department requests that the faculty member continue for a specified period of time. Those retired or resigned faculty members who continue on the Graduate Faculty without current appointments may serve as a voting member and chair a doctoral examination committee. Those who do not continue on the graduate faculty list must be replaced by a current member of the graduate faculty. This shall be done in consultation with the student's Dissertation Committee Chair.
6. To the maximum extent feasible, the same committee should be maintained from the proposal through the oral defense and final acceptance of the dissertation.
7. Once the committee has been agreed upon by student and advisor, the advisor should send a memo to the Graduate Secretary identifying the members of the committee for review and approval by the Department Head. A formal request for their participation by submission of the Request for Appointment of a Doctoral Examination Committee to the Graduate College does not have to be made until the preliminary exams are scheduled.

Although the committee provides guidance on the dissertation, it is the student's responsibility to be aware of all deadlines and requirements for completing the degree.

The Preliminary Examination (aka "defense of the dissertation proposal")

The preliminary exam consists of an oral defense of the dissertation proposal. This defense typically should be completed within the semester following the qualifying exams.

The must ask the Graduate Secretary to prepare and submit a *Request for Appointment of Doctoral Examination Committee* form at least 3 weeks before the date of the exam.

The complete thesis proposal should be submitted to all committee members at least 2 weeks

prior to the oral defense.

All committee members must be present (in person or by telecomm) for the preliminary exam. If the minimum required committee (see bullet points 1 and 2 above) is not present, the exam must be re-scheduled.

Following the exam, the committee should sign the *Certificate of Result of Preliminary Examination for the Doctoral Degree* and return it to the Graduate Secretary.

Three outcomes are possible from the exam:

Pass	The student may proceed with their proposed research.
Fail	The student could be terminated if the exam is failed. The student may be granted another opportunity to take the examination after completing additional work. The chair of the committee will ask the Graduate Secretary to inform the Graduate College if the student is to be given a 2nd examination.
Decision Deferred	The committee is in temporary adjournment until some later date (which must be within 6 months).

Paperwork Needed for The Preliminary Exam		
When	Forms Needed	Instructions
3 weeks before preliminary exam	<i>Request for Appointment of Doctoral Examination Committee</i> (green form)	Advisor completes form and returns it to the Graduate Secretary
At the preliminary exam	<i>Certificate of Result of Preliminary Examination for the Doctoral Degree</i>	Committee signs form indicating result of the exam; Chair returns it to the Graduate Secretary

The Final Examination (aka “dissertation defense”)

An oral final defense of the thesis is required. Student must register for HCD 599 for the term in which he/she takes his/her final examination. A term includes the 1st day of registration up to but not including the 1st day of registration for the next term.

To arrange the final exam, the student should meet with the committee chair to determine whether and when the final examination should be held. Once the exam is approved by the chair,

the student will be responsible for arranging a date and time when all committee members can participate in the exam (members can participate using appropriate technology if it is not possible to be physically present). Once the date and time is finalized, the student should inform the Graduate Secretary, who will assist in scheduling an appropriate room for the exam, and requesting the correct forms from the Graduate college.

The defense of the dissertation is open to faculty and students. The student is responsible for notifying the HCD Graduate Secretary at least 3 weeks in advance of the defense so that an announcement of the time, place, and topic of the proposal or dissertation can be distributed to the department.

All committee members must be present during the final an examination (in-person or via telecommunications).

The committee makes 2 decisions. The first is to determine the results of the exam. The second is to determine the status of the dissertation.

Three outcomes are possible for the exam:

Pass	A unanimous vote is required for a student to pass the final examination. All voting members of the committee must sign the <i>Certificate of Result</i>
Fail	The student could be terminated if the exam is failed. The student may be granted another opportunity to take the examination after completing additional work. The chair of the committee will ask the Graduate Secretary to inform the Graduate College if the student is to be given a 2nd examination.
Decision Deferred	The committee is in temporary adjournment until some later date (which must be within 6 months).

Three outcomes are possible for the evaluation of the dissertation:

Satisfactory	The red-bordered <i>Certificate of Approval</i> are signed and given to the candidate
Satisfactory, pending revision	The committee will sign the red-bordered <i>Certificate of Approval</i> when the prescribed revisions have been completed
Unsatisfactory	The committee will not sign the <i>Certificate of Approval</i> .

Paperwork Needed for Final Oral Defense of the Dissertation		
When	Forms Needed	Instructions
Early in the term that student intends to graduate (check Grad College deadline)	<i>Application for Degree</i> (Student should consult advisor and Director of Graduate Programs before submitting form)	Indicate intentions using U of I Integrate, or turn in form to Graduate Secretary
Once approval is given to schedule a final exam		Student should contact committee members to schedule a date and time for the exam.
Once a date for the exam is scheduled (but at least 3 weeks before the exam)	No standard form: Student must provide in writing: - date, time of exam - title of dissertation - short abstract of dissertation	Student must provide information to the Graduate Secretary, who will schedule a room for the defense, prepare the required forms, and send out a notice of the event to the department
At least 3 weeks before oral exam	<i>Request for Appointment of Doctoral Examination Committee</i> (green form)	Advisor should request form and return it to the Graduate Secretary
At the final oral exam	<i>Certificate of Result of Final Examination for the Doctoral Degree</i>	Committee signs form indicating result of the exam and the status of the dissertation; Chair returns it to the Graduate Secretary
At the final oral exam (or whenever revisions have been completed and approved)	<i>Certificate of Approval</i> (red-bordered form) <i>Department Approval Form</i> Departmental copy of dissertation	Committee signs form and gives to the Graduate Secretary. The student is responsible for submitting a copy of their completed dissertation to the Graduate Secretary to submit to the Department Head for approval at least 3 weeks before the Graduate College deposit deadline.

The Dissertation Format

The dissertation must be written in accordance with criteria described in Graduate College *Thesis Handbook*: <http://www.grad.uiuc.edu/thesis/thesis handbook/>

HCD students are required to follow publication guidelines of the American Psychological Association (APA) or the American Sociological Association (ASA). However, the placement of tables and figures should be in accordance with the required Graduate College format.

It is the responsibility of the student and the thesis committee chair to ensure that the dissertation is in final form and properly formatted before it is forwarded to the Graduate Secretary who will then forward it to the Department Head. The Graduate Secretary may refuse to accept a dissertation that is incorrectly formatted.

If there are any questions regarding format, the student should contact the HCD Graduate Secretary in 128 Bevier Hall (333-3869).

Dissertation Approval and Submission

After the *Certificate of Approval* form has been signed by the dissertation committee, the dissertation must be approved by the Department Head.

The dissertation must be submitted to the Graduate College after it has been approved by the dissertation committee and the Department Head.

All dissertations must be deposited in the Graduate College by the published deadline to receive a degree. A checklist to complete before depositing the thesis is available at:

<http://www.grad.uiuc.edu/thesis/thesishandbook/appendixA.asp>

An additional copy of your dissertation **MUST** be submitted to the Graduate Secretary in Room 128 Bevier Hall before the degree will be granted.

Deadlines for Receiving the PhD Degree

Doctoral degrees are conferred in May, October, and December (but not in August). In order to receive a degree, a student must be on the graduation list for the appropriate graduation date.

To be placed on the graduation list, the student must (1) place themselves, by using UI Integrate Self-Service, on the appropriate degree list, and (2) meet the Graduate College deadline depositing for the dissertation. The deadlines for both of these requirements are published in course schedules, the Graduate College Calendar, and at the Graduate College Website:

<http://www.grad.uiuc.edu/thesis/deadlines.htm>

Please notify the Graduate Secretary once you have placed your name on a degree list. .

The Graduate College requires all departments to confirm that students on the graduation list have completed all requirements. The Graduate Secretary will remove names of students who are ineligible for graduation.

Exit Interview

An exit interview will be conducted with each student upon completion of the doctoral program. Students should contact the Graduate Secretary to arrange for an exit interview with the Department Head when scheduling the Final Oral Examination.