

*Pathway to Research Writing/Proposal
Approval: A Review of Doctoral
Dissertation/Master's Thesis/Seminar
Paper Guidelines and Processes*

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The Theme of the Seminar

- *to apprise faculty advising graduate doctoral and thesis/seminar paper research on the processes associated with the support necessary to guide students at the dissertation/thesis/seminar paper writing levels to go through the writing and defense process with minimal challenges*

Theme Contd.

It is also the goal of this scholarly exercise to bring everybody to speed as to who is involved and how to lead students in the dissertation/thesis/seminar paper writing and defense process.

Theme Contd.

- *to identify how the members of the dissertation/thesis/seminar paper committees should operate, what their responsibilities are and who does what during the writing and defense periods*

Theme Types

- Proposal writing and defense
- IRB application submission period
- Writing and Directing of the Dissertation/Thesis/seminar paper

Theme Type Contd.

- **Composition of the Dissertation/Thesis Examining Committee**
- **External Examiner**
- **Examining Committee and Final Oral Defense Chair**

Proposal Writing and Defense

- At the proposal writing and defense stage, a student must have completed the first three chapters of the dissertation/thesis/seminar paper. The proposal must be defended and approved by the student's committee.

IRB Application Submission

- **An approved proposal will automatically become an IRB package. Student's approved proposal with all detailed forms and IRB application will be forwarded to the chair of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) who is also the Dean of Graduate School**

Writing and Directing of the Dissertation/Thesis/Seminar Paper

- If a student's IRB application is approved, a much detailed research will begin. The student will be working with his committee members under the guidance of the dissertation committee chair to make sure that the writing and content are in congruent with the stipulations and standards of the graduate school.

Composition of the Dissertation/Thesis/Seminar Paper Examining Committee

- **The dissertation/thesis/seminar paper examining committee evaluates the dissertation/thesis/seminar paper and the candidate's oral defense**

Composition of the Dissertation/Thesis Examining Committee Contd.

- This committee consists of members of a doctoral advisory committee and an external examiner. The advisory committee is responsible for guiding, correcting and suggesting best way forward to the candidate under the leadership of the dissertation chair.

Composition of the Dissertation/Thesis Examining Committee Contd.

No none member of the advisory committee is authorized under any circumstances to interject, change nor decide on what the committee directing a dissertation/thesis/seminar paper had already worked on

Composition of the Dissertation/Thesis Examining Committee Contd.

- **For any such changes and or contributions to be welcome, such directions should come through the authorization of the committee members.**

External Examiner

- **An external examiner must be a doctorate-prepared expert not affiliated with the university. The department under the direct leadership of the program chairperson in consultation of the dissertation committee chair should approve a recommended external examiner.**

External Examiner Contd.

- Send a curriculum vitae of any proposed and approved external examiner who is not a member of the BSU senior faculty to the dean of the graduate school. The chair of the doctoral program and the dean of Graduate School must approve both the committee composition including the external examiner.

External Examiner

- An external examiner must be an assistant, associate, or full professor in the teaching or research area of the candidate's discipline who is knowledgeable in the area of the student's research.

External Examiner Contd.

- An external examiner must have published in a refereed journal, conference publications, a book, or book chapters

External Examiner Contd.

- **An external examiner must submit his/her credentials as documented by a curriculum vitae to the Graduate School for review and approval.**

External Examiner Contd.

- Every dissertation sponsoring committee should identify an external examiner no later than the beginning of the semester in which the oral defense is likely to occur.

External Examiner Contd.

- He or she should be invited to thoroughly review the student's dissertation project prior to the time of the oral defense.

External Examiner Contd.

➤ **Please note that an external examiner is not and should not be one who has been part of the candidate's committee all long.**

External Examiner Contd.

➤ There is no monetary compensation due an external examiner

External Examiner Contd.

- An examining committee final oral defense Chair must be identified. This person must be a senior faculty member as described above and may not be the chair of the student candidate's doctoral advisory committee.

External Examiner Contd.

- All Dissertation Examining Committees must consist of at least five faculty members: the three from the doctoral advisory committee plus two additional members. One of these additional members must be from outside the Department.

Steps in the Dissertation Process

- While there is no single set of steps that characterize all dissertations/thesis/seminar paper, there are elements and procedures that are common to all. These include the following:

SELECTING MEMBERS OF THE DOCTORAL/THESIS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

➤ After selecting the dissertation/thesis topic in consultation with the candidate's advisor, the next step is to obtain the additional members of the Doctoral/thesis Advisory Committee.

➤ In general, student candidates should attempt to find additional members of the doctoral advisory committee who are knowledgeable about, and interested in the topic of the dissertation/thesis. Consultation with the Dissertation/Thesis Advisory Committee Chair is crucial in this decision

- As mentioned above, the minimal size of the Doctoral advisory committee is three senior faculty members, one member from outside the student candidate's program area and an external examiner. This brings to five the committee members and three only for the master's. There are no waivers to this policy.

➤ The chair of the doctoral program in consultation with the doctoral dissertation chair and in the case of master's program, the coordinator of the graduate program approves the doctoral/thesis advisory committee.

➤ Changes in the composition of the committee are generally made and approved within the Department. Notification of the change when made should be sent to the dean of Graduate School.

➤ After a committee has been approved, and the candidate or a committee member desires a change in the chairperson or a committee member, the parties involved shall discuss the concerns. If there is no resolution, the following steps shall be implemented by the student candidate:

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➤ The request for change of committee chair or member is initiated on the appropriate form (*Committee Modification Form*)

- A request for a new committee member and or chair is proposed.
- The form is submitted to the chair of the Program who will review and approve.

- The department shall make a final determination on this request.
- However, in a situation where the chair of the department is the one being requested to change, a senior faculty in the department will act in his stead.



➤ A notification of change
*(Notification of Committee
Modification form)* with a copy of
the form, with the department
chair's signature, is forwarded to the
Dean of Graduate School.

***SELECTING THE TOPIC IN COLLABORATION WITH
THE DISSERTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
CHAIR***

- Perhaps the first step in the Dissertation process for most student candidates is selecting a topic, and perhaps the most common reason for difficulties is that many student candidates wait until the end of their course work to begin thinking about the issue.

➤ Ideally, a Dissertation/Thesis should be the logical culmination of the courses and experiences that constitute a student candidate's program

➤ Consequently, the search for a dissertation/thesis topic begins with the first course that a student candidate takes and continues until the student candidate's doctoral/thesis advisory committee approves the dissertation/thesis proposal

➤ However, selecting a topic for dissertation/thesis is a continuous process that requires the input of all members of the candidate's Advisory Committee and should be conducted accordingly.

➤ Throughout the process, it is critical that the student candidate begin to work closely with the faculty members who will assist him/her during the dissertation/thesis writing process as soon as possible

COMPLETING AN INITIAL DRAFT OF THE DISSERTATION/THESES PROPOSAL

- Dissertation/Thesis proposals will consist of the first three chapters of the dissertation, depending on the nature of the dissertation/thesis and the requirements of the doctoral/thesis advisory committee

➤ The proposal should range between 70 and 80 pages (for dissertation), and 15-25 pages (for thesis), not including the complete references and appendices.

➤ Certain core elements of a Dissertation/thesis proposal are fairly common. Minimally, every Dissertation/Thesis proposal should contain the following elements:

(1)

A statement of the purpose of the study, including such topics as the need for the study; the research questions that the dissertation/thesis will attempt to answer;

(2) A literature review containing at least a presentation of relevant research so that the proposed study is placed in a theoretical context and demonstrates familiarity with methods used in that area of interest;

(3) A detailed presentation of the methods that will be used in the study, including such areas as sampling, tools, variables, data collection methods and management with statistical software, statistical analytical procedures and formulae, hypothesis proposed and dummy tables of expected results; and

(4) A proposed timeline, containing a best-guess estimate of when each of the separate parts of the dissertation (IRB approval, data collection, data analysis, completion of first draft, oral defense, etc.) will be completed.

➤ All proposals must contain a table of contents in which, minimally, the elements presented above are listed.

➤ While all doctoral advisory committees work differently, the most common practice is for the student candidate and his or her Dissertation/Thesis Chair to develop an initial draft of the proposal.

- The draft is then circulated among the remaining members of the proposed doctoral/thesis advisory committee for discussion. It is advisable, although not mandatory, for the doctoral/thesis advisory committee to meet officially at some point to discuss the proposal.

➤ The doctoral program requires at least one annual meeting of the student candidate's doctoral/thesis advisory committee

- At some point, the doctoral/thesis advisory committee will approve the Dissertation/Thesis proposal and will indicate this by signing the proposal cover sheet.

➤ However, in the Doctoral Program (only) at BSU, the Dissertation Committee Chair and the Department Chair are mandated to sign the dissertation approval cover sheet. A copy of this *cover sheet* can be obtained from the department.

OBTAINING FINAL APPROVAL FOR THE DISSERTATION PROPOSAL

➤ After approval by the doctoral advisory committee (*with the Proposal Transmittal Form*), all proposals must be submitted to the College Proposal Review Committee (CPRC).

➤ This committee meets regularly, and the dean of Graduate School has charged the committee with the responsibility of granting final Approval for all Dissertation proposals.

➤ The following steps constitute the process by which the CPRC reviews a proposal

➤ After the doctoral advisory committee has approved the dissertation proposal, and signed the *Cover Sheet* and *Proposal Transmittal Form*

➤ The Doctoral Advisory Committee, through the Chair, will submit one original and three copies of these documents and the approved Dissertation/thesis Proposal to the Graduate School.

➤ The Dean of Graduate School will review and sign the documents to signify approval of the Committee's composition.

- The reviewers from the CPRC will evaluate the proposal against the *criteria* established by the committee. If the proposal receives a favorable review, the reviewers will so indicate to the CPRC Chair, who will notify the Chair of the doctoral/thesis advisory committee.

➤ If the proposal receives an unfavorable review, it is brought to the full CPRC for discussion. This process produces one of three possible outcomes:

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- (1) The proposal receives a favorable review by the committee,
- (2) The proposal receives an unfavorable review, or
- (3) The committee may ask for clarification.

- In all cases, feedback will be sent to the doctoral/thesis advisory committee Chair.
- If a proposal has received an unfavorable review, or if clarification has been requested, the CPRC Chair will provide feedback to the student candidate regarding the reasons for the negative evaluation.

- A student candidate and his or her Dissertation/Thesis Chair may be asked to meet with the committee
- Using the feedback from CPRC and in consultation with the doctoral /thesis advisory committee, the student candidate should revise his or her proposal and then resubmit the proposal to the CPRC Chair.

➤ The revised proposal will be resubmitted to the original reviewers for their review and evaluation. By this process, approval may be finally obtained

➤ Even if the CPRC has accepted a proposal on the first attempt, the CPRC will provide feedback. A student candidate may want to incorporate this feedback to make revisions in the proposal.

➤ When a final revision of the proposal has been completed, the student candidate should submit the final copy to the dean of Graduate School

➤ If no revision is necessary, the original version of the proposal is the final version.

SUBMITTING THE PROPOSAL TO THE INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB)

➤ The Bowie State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) must approve all research involving primary (human subject)/secondary data.

- To ensure the protection of human subjects and to comply with federal law,
- Bowie State University requires IRB review and approval of all research projects involving human subjects or human materials before initiation

➤ This policy applies to all biomedical and behavioral research involving human subjects or human materials conducted by faculty, staff, and student candidates of Bowie State University.



COMMUNICATING WITH OTHER MEMBERS OF THE STUDENT CANDIDATE'S DEPARTMENT

➤ When CPRC has approved the proposal, the doctoral/thesis advisory committee Chair should distribute a one-page abstract of the proposal to all faculty members in the Department. This short abstract will also be posted by the department.

➤ The Dissertation/thesis proposal demonstrates the graduate student candidate's knowledge of and ability to conduct the proposed research.

➤ An approved proposal, signed by the doctoral/thesis advisory committee, is an agreement between the graduate student candidate and the advisory committee

➤ Part of this agreement is that the proposed research be completed with the time limits established by the Graduate School, thus assuring the continuing relevance of the research topic.

➤ Within 7 days of the approval of a proposal by all members of the Doctoral/thesis advisory committee, the student candidate must file the proposal with the Department and with the Graduate School with the following:



- i. the Dissertation committee members' signatures
- ii. the Dissertation Proposal Transmittal form, and

- iii. curriculum vitae, if a Dissertation Advisory Committee Chair or committee member is not a Bowie State University senior faculty member or is from outside the university.

CHANGES IN PROPOSAL OR COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP AFTER APPROVALS HAVE BEEN OBTAINED

- The student candidate must notify his/her department of any changes in membership of the Doctoral/Thesis Advisory Committee or of Committee Chair.

➤ Once the proposal has been approved, and provided the proposal remains current, the doctoral/thesis advisory committee may not unilaterally require significant theoretical or methodological changes in the substantive direction of the project.

➤ The committee and the graduate student candidate may, however, jointly agree on such changes if any.

- Such changes should be dated and noted in the student candidate's file. Changes of this nature will also require re-submission, review and approval by the IRB

➤ Changes in the membership of the doctoral/thesis advisory committee after the acceptance of the proposal do not require re-approval of the proposal.

➤ A candidate whose dissertation/thesis fulfills the commitments made in the proposal and any modifications made to it as specified above is entitled to an oral defense of the Dissertation.

IMPLEMENTING THE PROPOSAL AND WRITING THE DISSERTATION

- After the proposal has been approved as described, the student candidate may begin the process of implementing the study. The critical element in this process is close contact and collaboration with the Dissertation/Thesis Chair.

➤ The student candidate should involve other members of the doctoral/thesis advisory committee, although their input at this stage may be less intense.

Responsibility of the Dissertation/Thesis Advisory Chair

- The Chair of the doctoral/thesis advisory committee is responsible for the following:

i. Seeing that the candidate receives regular and continuing guidance in his or her research, including timely response from all committee members to work on the document submitted to them by the candidate;

ii. Coordinating the responses of committee members, so that the candidate does not receive fundamentally conflicting advice;
and

iii. Informing candidates who are not making reasonable progress what they must do to avoid being dismissed for failure to make such progress.

iv. In addition, each doctoral advisory committee will meet at least once a year with the candidate to do the following;

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1. Review the candidate's progress,
2. Make suggestions concerning future research, and
3. Record the committee's findings and suggestions.

OBTAINING APPROVAL FOR SCHEDULING THE FINAL ORAL DEFENSE

➤ Before an oral defense may be held, the following steps must be accomplished:



➤ The doctoral advisory committee members must stipulate in writing that the written Dissertation is of sufficient quality to be defended (*Dissertation Readiness Approval Form*).

➤ The examining committee must be formed. All members of the examining committee must have a complete copy of the written, formatted Dissertation

➤ An examining committee/oral defense Chair must be identified. The Dissertation Committee Chair may chair the Examining Committee.

Dissertation/Thesis Defense Final Approval

- The final request for a dissertation/thesis defense is made in writing to the Dean of the Graduate School by the Dissertation/thesis Advisory Committee Chair.

➤ The request in writing comes with a clean copy of the dissertation/thesis and must be submitted to the Graduate School by the DTAC Chair.

GRADUATE SCHOOL STANDARDS

➤ Graduate School
Dissertation/Thesis Standard
includes the following:



i. Institutional Review Board
Approval of Research

- ii. Completion of the required research and data analysis;
- iii. Review of the appropriate literature which is of sufficient breadth and depth that it meets the level of scholarship for doctoral studies

- iv. Follows the American Psychological Association (APA) or MLA writing style format
- v. Comprehensive and accurate use of citations for all sources used in the study

vi. Consistent use of type-face
(Times New Roman 12)
throughout the document,
diagrams, tables and charts;

vii. Avoid plagiarism
(academic/Intellectual Property)
for the danger associated with
being caught

viii. Complete spell-check

ix. Reference pages consistent with current APA/MLA style

• SCHEDULING THE FINAL ORAL DOCTORAL/THESIS DEFENSE

➤ The scheduling of any dissertation defense is the responsibility of the Graduate School.

Procedures for Dissertation Defense

- 1. Attendance*
- 2. Vote of the Examination Committee*
- 3. Graduate School Representative*
- 4. Dean's Representative*

Graduate School/College Dean Representative

- The representative will be responsible for observing the defense process and insuring that the procedures are preserved and followed.

➤ The representative does not have any voting rights with regard to the student's performance on the defense. The representative may ask questions where necessary, but does not have any signature authority on the examination documents

Defense Approval Deadline

- All doctoral/thesis defense approvals for May graduation must be completed by the second week in March.

➤ Any defense approval request submitted after the deadline will not be reviewed for approval for
May graduation

➤ All doctoral defenses must be completed by the second week in April.

➤ Any defense that failed to meet the deadline will not be included in the list for May graduation.

➤ All doctoral/thesis defense approvals for December graduation must be completed by the second week in October.

➤ Any defense approval request submitted after the deadline will not be reviewed for approval for December graduation

➤ All doctoral defenses must be completed by the second week in November.

➤ Any defense that failed to meet the deadline will not be included in the list for December graduation.

End of Presentation

- Thanks for being such an attentive audience.
- **INTERACTIVE SESSION!!!**

