

## Pre-proposal & Request for Approval of Ph.D. Dissertation Committee: Overview

The doctoral dissertation is a culminating experience for all Ph.D. students through which a student is expected to complete quality research that contributes to the theoretical/research knowledge base of the candidate's field of study. The formal dissertation proposal at the Lynch School of Education begins with the development of a Pre-proposal and the completion of the Request for Approval of Ph.D. Dissertation Committee forms. The Pre-proposal and Request for Approval processes are designed as vehicles for the identification of a dissertation committee (a chair and 2-3 readers) and for the articulation and clarification of the research question and the research methodology. Please review the following description of these requirements and the Lynch School Policy governing the Dissertation Committee, and then complete the Pre-proposal and the Request for Approval form and **return them to the Associate Dean of Graduate Studies for review prior to your meeting**. Once you have met with the Associate Dean of Graduate Studies and responded to any suggestions from that meeting, your materials will be forwarded to the Department Chair for review. Once approved, a formal invitation will be sent to the proposed members of your Dissertation Committee. Upon their acceptance of the invitation to serve on your committee they will be formally appointed and you can proceed to the next stage of the dissertation process, the development of your Dissertation Proposal. See the Doctoral Programs Policies and Procedures for additional details of next steps.

### Pre-proposal

The Pre-proposal should be typed and submitted with the Request for Approval of the Ph.D. Dissertation Committee form. The suggested length of the Pre-proposal is 8-12 double-spaced typed pages, including references. The actual length of the Pre-proposal is to be determined in consultation with the proposed dissertation chair. The Pre-proposal should be prepared in accordance with the following guidelines:

#### TITLE

Give the tentative title you plan to use. It should be concise thereby giving the reader as exact an idea of your problem, question, or issue as possible.

#### PROBLEM

State as clearly and as fully as possible the problem, question or issue that you intend to investigate and its significance.

#### LITERATURE REVIEW

Others have contributed historical, philosophical, or empirical information relevant to the problem/question/issue that you have selected. Critically review the **major** research and theory that furnishes the **immediate** background for your investigation, with a specific focus on clarifying the importance and uniqueness of your study. Identify existing empirical research that contributes significantly to framing your research, situating your work within this developing framework.

#### RESEARCH DESIGN

Describe the proposed research design to be used, specific methods (including strategies for collecting data, instruments, questionnaires, etc.) and proposed analyses.

#### REFERENCES

References should be accurate, pertinent, comprehensive and selective. Please use the current edition of the American Psychological Association Publication Manual for formatting your references.

# Dissertation Committee Policy (see next page for Request for Approval form)

The doctoral committee should be comprised of those individuals who can best support the achievement of the research goals.

Although the candidate and the Dissertation Chair are expected to suggest committee members, the official membership of the committee is designated and approved by the Department Chair, after the candidate has consulted with the Associate Dean of Graduate Studies.

The committee is composed of no fewer than three and no more than four voting members. Each voting member has one pass/fail vote at the candidate's dissertation defense (also known as the final oral examination). In the case of a three member committee, all members should be Boston College full-time faculty, except that one of the members may also be a Boston College doctoral level administrator or research faculty. In the case of a four member committee, one of the committee members may be someone external to the Boston College faculty, if an individual outside of Boston College has experience or expertise that would contribute to the committee in a way that is not represented by the Boston College committee members. In this instance, the external committee member must submit a curriculum vitae and be approved by the Department Chair. All committee members must have the terminal degree for their field (e.g., Ph.D., Ed.D., J. D).

In order to ensure that the committee is able to support the goal of high quality research, the committee should be composed to reflect:

- 1) expertise in the content area of the dissertation
- 2) expertise in the methodology used in the dissertation
- 3) a perspective on the significance of the study within a broader theory-research-practice context

In order to meet the above requirements, the committee is typically composed of two members from the candidate's program area, with the Chair normally in the program area. The third committee member is typically from outside of the candidate's program area. In some circumstances, however, the external perspective can be offered by a faculty member from within the program area, whose area of expertise and educational background serves to significantly enhance, rather than duplicate, the expertise of the other committee members. In all cases, when suggesting committee members the candidate needs to explain in writing how the proposed committee addresses the 3 identified criteria.

## **Changes in Composition of Dissertation Committee**

Changes in the composition of the committee should not be made after the proposal hearing has been held and the proposal approved except in unusual circumstances. After the initial approval of the committee, any requests for changes in committee membership should be made only after the student meets with the Department Chair to determine and assess the reasons for the proposed committee change. The student should then complete the form requesting a change in committee membership. This form must be discussed with and approved by the Chair of the Dissertation Committee in order to move forward. The Department Chair then reviews the request. If approved, the Administrative Assistant to the Department Chair sends a form to faculty being asked to leave the committee and those being asked to join, requesting that they sign off to indicate their agreement to the proposed change. Once agreement has been reached by all involved and all signatures are handed in to the Department Chair, the Administrative Assistant to the Department Chair sends a letter to the student approving the change and copying all involved.

# Request for Approval of Ph.D. Dissertation Committee

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Program \_\_\_\_\_ Advisor \_\_\_\_\_

Proposed title of Ph.D. dissertation:

\_\_\_\_\_

Have you completed Coursework?  Yes  No

If you have any remaining Courses or Incompletes, please indicate below when and how you anticipate completing them.

\_\_\_\_\_

Date of entry into doctoral program \_\_\_\_\_

Dates of comprehensive exams \_\_\_\_\_

Estimated date for submission of Human Subjects Review \_\_\_\_\_

Estimated date for proposal hearing \_\_\_\_\_

Estimated date for receipt of degree \_\_\_\_\_

## Requested members of Dissertation Committee

\_\_\_\_\_  
NAME OF CHAIR

\_\_\_\_\_  
PROGRAM/SCHOOL AFFILIATION

\_\_\_\_\_  
NAME OF READER

\_\_\_\_\_  
PROGRAM/SCHOOL AFFILIATION

\_\_\_\_\_  
NAME OF READER

\_\_\_\_\_  
PROGRAM/SCHOOL AFFILIATION

\_\_\_\_\_  
NAME OF OPTIONAL MEMBER/READER

\_\_\_\_\_  
PROGRAM/SCHOOL AFFILIATION

*Attach a concise (no more than 250 words) typewritten statement of how your proposed committee will fulfill the goals for committee composition representing each of the three criteria listed on the first page of this form.*

Do your proposed readers have a copy of this form and a draft copy of your Pre-proposal?  Yes  No

The signature below of the Proposed Chair signifies approval of Proposed Committee and Candidate's readiness to file Pre-Proposal:

\_\_\_\_\_  
SIGNATURE OF PROPOSED CHAIR

\_\_\_\_\_  
SIGNATURE OF ASSOCIATE DEAN OF GRADUATE STUDIES

\_\_\_\_\_  
SIGNATURE OF DEPARTMENT CHAIR

After final action: original to student file, with copy of letter from Department Chair confirming committee