DOCTORAL STUDY IN SPECIAL EDUCATION AT THE UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA:
GUIDELINES FOR PROSPECTIVE AND CURRENT STUDENTS

These guidelines are a summary of policies and procedures that are described in more detail in the current University of Virginia Graduate Record or that have been adopted by the special education program area in the Department of Curriculum, Instruction, and Special Education. Prospective students may apply to the Curry School of Education for admission to either the Ed.D. or the Ph.D. program. A summary of differences between the procedures and requirements for the two degrees is available from Curry’s Office of Admissions and Student Affairs. In many respects, however, the purposes and requirements of the two degree programs are similar for doctoral students in special education. The following are goals and expectations of doctoral study and procedures for application for admission, assignment and selection of advisors, design of a program of study, and examinations that are common to the two degrees.

OVERVIEW

Goals and Expectations
We have designed the doctoral program in special education to prepare individuals for leadership positions in special education research, the education of teachers of students with disabilities, and the administration of special education programs. Most graduates take faculty positions in colleges and universities in which they are expected to assume the typical duties of teaching, research, and service. Some graduates assume administrative positions in which they are responsible for special education programs in public or private schools, hospitals, or other agencies. Early in their doctoral program, students should select advisors and a course of study consistent with their particular career objectives.

Doctoral students may choose a course of study emphasizing one or more of several categories of disabilities consistent with the areas of expertise of the faculty with whom they study: emotional or behavioral disorders, learning disabilities, mental retardation, or severe disabilities. We expect that all students, however, will become acquainted with the professional literature on the various disability categories and will become conversant with broad issues in the field of special education.

Completion of the doctoral program ordinarily requires the equivalent of three years of full-time study for the student entering with a Master's degree. Minimum full-time residency requirements for the two doctoral degrees are set forth in the comparison between the Ed.D. and Ph.D.

1 Obtain a copy of the document by going to http://curry.edschool.virginia.edu/admissions/pdf/

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Students are strongly encouraged, however, to apply for financial assistance and to devote full-time effort to doctoral study for as many semesters of their program as possible.

The University of Virginia's doctoral program in special education has been consistently ranked among the top 5 nationally in distinction of faculty, quality of graduates, and overall quality. The program is highly demanding and enables graduates to compete for the most desirable professional opportunities. Numerous alumni of the programs have achieved national prominence as scholars and leaders in special education.

During their courses of study, students work closely with faculty members in internships and other assignments to obtain experience in teaching at the college level, research, professional writing, and service (e.g., consulting, work with professional organizations). Most students have published at least one article in a professional journal or chapter in a book before completing their degree. We expect all students to attain a degree of proficiency in research and writing that will prepare them to make contributions to the professional literatures of special education and related disciplines.

**Application for Admission**

Further information regarding both the Ed.D. and Ph.D. programs and application forms may be obtained by writing to the Curry School Office of Admissions and Student Affairs. Application forms and other information can also be obtained from the University of Virginia Web site (http://www.virginia.edu/) or the Curry School of Education Web site (http://curry.edschool.virginia.edu/). Calls may be made to the Department of Curriculum, Instruction, and Special Education (434 924-0831) requesting further information or guidance from the director of doctoral programs in special education.

An application for admission may be submitted to either program (Ed.D. or Ph.D.) at any time, as there are no admission deadlines. However, we advise prospective students to submit an application as early as possible, as applications are evaluated on a rolling admission (first come, first considered) basis.

The application materials specify what to submit to complete the application process. In addition to transcripts of all prior college credits and letters of recommendation, applicants must submit scores on the Graduate Record Examination and a statement of professional goals. Read the application materials carefully and make sure that the Office of Admissions receives all required information promptly.

A committee of faculty in special education, plus one faculty member from outside the program area, makes decisions regarding admission. Using multiple criteria, the committee evaluates

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2 Curry School of Education
Admissions and Student Affairs
P.O. Box 400261
Charlottesville, VA 22904-4261

**Special note:** To be given preference for financial assistance for the following academic year, applications must be received by February 15.
whether (a) the applicant's prior training, academic achievement, professional performance, and test scores indicate likely success in the program and (b) the applicant's career goals are consistent with the program's offerings. The committee does not use rigid cut-off criteria for grade point average or GRE scores. It does, however, give preference to individuals whose application materials show promise of outstanding performance in a demanding graduate program and the likelihood of significant contributions to the profession of special education. The committee takes affirmative action to admit traditionally underrepresented groups.

Assignment and Selection of Advisors and Committees

Students proceed through the doctoral program with the help of individual faculty members who serve as advisors for various aspects of the program. In addition, doctoral students are assigned or select committees of faculty, consistent with requirements detailed in the Graduate Record, (available on line at http://www.virginia.edu/~regist/gradrec/) to examine and approve the student's progress through program requirements.

Temporary advisor. Upon admission to the doctoral program, students are assigned a temporary advisor. The temporary advisor helps the student plan the first year's course of study and prepare for the preliminary examination, which is scheduled after completion of 12 semester hours of credit in the program. Temporary advisors are typically assigned on the basis of current faculty advising load and compatibility of the student's and advisor's interests. Students may request assignment to a specific temporary advisor, but such requests will be honored only with the consent of the faculty member.

Program advisor and committee. Following successful completion of the preliminary examination, the student selects an advisor for the remaining program of study. The student may request that the temporary advisor continue as program advisor, but a change of advisors is often made at this point in the program. It is the student's responsibility to discuss the selection with the temporary advisor. Faculty members may accept or decline a student's request to serve as program advisor, depending on commitments to other students and other considerations. In consultation with the program advisor, the student selects a program advisory committee of faculty who must approve the student's program of study and evaluate the student's comprehensive examinations. Faculty members may accept or decline a student's request to serve as committee members. Composition of the advisory committees is specified for the Ed.D. and Ph.D. degrees (see footnote 1 for ).

Dissertation advisor and committee. Following successful completion of the comprehensive examinations, the student selects an advisor and faculty committee to supervise and evaluate the dissertation. Students often choose to continue with the same advisor and committee selected for the program of study, but it is not unusual for changes in advisor or committee members to be made at this point. It is the student's responsibility to discuss the selection of the dissertation advisor with the program advisor and to discuss the selection of the dissertation committee with the dissertation advisor. Faculty members may accept or decline a student's request to serve as dissertation advisor or as a member of the dissertation committee. The comparisons between the degrees specifies the composition of the advisory committees for the Ed.D. and Ph.D. degrees.
Program of Study

Programs of study must meet the requirements set forth in the *Graduate Record*. Within the limits set forth in the *Record*, however, the selection of courses, internships, and other credit-earning experiences is determined by the student in consultation with the advisor, subject to approval of the program advisory committee. The content of the program of study depends on the student's prior training and experience, as well as on the student's interests and career goals. However, we expect students in the doctoral program in special education to complete a series of special education seminars, a series of courses in research methodology, and internships.

Table 1 provides a sample program of studies for a student with a high-incidence focus follows (note that course types rather than specific courses are sometimes indicated). The subordinate sections describe various types of courses.

**Courses**

*Special education seminars.* We offer core seminars in special education for all incoming students. During their first year of study, students enroll in a special education seminar each semester for the purpose of becoming acquainted with the program area faculty, studying broad issues in special education, and focusing on the development of their writing skills.
Members of the faculty offer other topical and issues-oriented seminars in special education periodically, and students may enroll in them at any point in their programs of study.

Courses in research methods. We expect all doctoral students in special education to complete a series of courses in research methods that will prepare them to evaluate and conduct research, including a doctoral dissertation. Students usually begin the series of courses early in their programs of study and enter the series at a point consistent with their prior work in research methods and statistics. Students will take courses in both quantitative and qualitative research and study single-case as well as group experimental designs. Students in the Ph.D. program must complete a minimum of 12 semester hours in research; those in the Ed.D. program must complete a minimum of 9 semester hours in research.

Internships
We offer internships in teaching, research, administration, and other professional activities to provide practice in roles of the type students will assume after completing their degrees. Most students complete at least three internships for at least 9 semester hours credit. Most students complete their internships during the second and third years of full-time study or their equivalent. Students, in consultation with the program advisor and with the approval of the advisory committee, are responsible for selecting and designing specific internships.

Examinations
Doctoral study involves a series of examinations used to assess the student's performance and progress through various phases of the program. We make efforts to prepare students to pass these checkpoints.

Preliminary Examination
After completing 12 semester hours of course work in the program (i.e., in the second semester of full-time study or its equivalent), the student must, with the advice and consent of the temporary advisor, schedule a two-hour preliminary examination. The student's temporary advisor and three additional members of the special education faculty chosen at random by the director of doctoral studies in special education conduct the examination. Any interested faculty member may, however, attend and participate in the examination. No student other than the one being examined is allowed to attend. The purpose of the preliminary examination is to assess the student's strengths, weaknesses, motivation, and potential for achieving an in-depth knowledge of special education issues and a high level of competence in professional writing and speaking. Evaluation of the student's performance takes into consideration the student's prior training and employment experience. The faculty members focus their evaluation on helping the student make a wise career choice and recommending specific courses or experiences, if any, that the student should obtain if he or she continues in the special education doctoral program. The student is responsible for preparing several items for all members of the examining committee and distributing them at least one week in advance of the scheduled examination:
1. A vita (personal resume). The vita informs the examining committee of the student's general academic and employment history and professional accomplishments. The student is expected to describe his or her professional history and answer questions from the examining committee regarding relevant professional experiences and perspectives.

2. An original paper of approximately 15 pages (excluding title page, abstract, and references) prepared according to the guidelines of the most recent edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*. The student must consult with the temporary advisor regarding the topic of the paper. The paper must be prepared expressly for the preliminary examination (i.e., must not have been used in prior course work or for a course in which the student is then enrolled) and must be exclusively the work of the student. The student is not to have received prior feedback on the paper from any source, including the advisor. The examining committee evaluates the paper on the criteria of writing style, clarity, and depth of understanding of the topic reflected in the exploration of the chosen topic. The student provides a synopsis of the paper and answers questions from the examining committee regarding its content.

3. A Record of Progress (a form available from the Curry School of Education Office of Admissions and Records or online at [http://curry.edschool.virginia.edu/admissions/pdf/](http://curry.edschool.virginia.edu/admissions/pdf/)) completed to the point of the examination. The Record of Progress informs the examining committee of the courses completed and grades received to date and the courses in which the student is then enrolled. During the exam, the student reports on and evaluates his or her experiences in the program to date and answers questions from the members of the examining committee regarding career goals and aspirations.

The student's temporary advisor, without consultation with the student, selects a published research study and distributes copies to the student and all members of the examining committee at least one week prior to the preliminary examination. The student presents a critique of the study and answers questions from the examining committee regarding the problem investigated, research methodology, conclusions, and implications of the findings. The committee takes into account the student's level of prior training in research in evaluating the critique.

On the basis of its assessment of the student's performance in the preliminary examination, the examining committee may indicate one of the following options:

1. The student has completed the preliminary examination successfully, and he or she may continue in the doctoral program without special contingencies.

2. The student has completed the preliminary examination successfully, but with special contingencies (which will be specified in writing to the student by the temporary advisor) such as: (a) successful completion of specific course work to address deficiencies detected by the examining committee or (b) successful completion of other professional experiences deemed necessary by the examining committee.

3. The preliminary examination indicated a mismatch between the student's career goals and the program offerings in special education, although the student showed good potential...
for doctoral study in another field, and the student is encouraged to apply for admission to a different degree program.

4. The preliminary examination indicated substantial weaknesses in the student's preparation for doctoral study, and the committee discontinues the student from the program.

**Comprehensive Examinations**

Prior to preparing a dissertation proposal, and typically following the second year of full-time study or its equivalent, the student must take comprehensive examinations in the chosen field of study. The student's program advisor, with the participation and approval of the program advisory committee, prepares the examination questions. The examination is written. The student's advisor and program advisory committee may, however, also require an oral examination. The student may be expected to write one or more parts of the examination in several three to four hour blocks over a period of several days. Typically, however, the faculty in special education give students several comprehensive examination questions, each of which is to be answered over a period of two to four weeks and prepared in the form of a paper that could be submitted for consideration for publication in a professional journal or submitted as a grant application.

In the Ed.D. program, examinations must include questions in each of the supporting fields of study. In the Ph.D. program, the examination must include a question regarding research methodology. The research question for the Ph.D. comprehensive examination may be posed in any of a variety of forms, such as a critical review of literature or a research project to be completed by a date specified by the program advisor and committee.

After passing the comprehensive examinations, the student is ready to select a dissertation advisor and committee and begin preparation of a dissertation proposal.

**Dissertation Proposal Defense**

Under the supervision of the dissertation advisor, the student must prepare a written proposal for research that will constitute the doctoral dissertation. With the advisor's approval, the student must schedule a two-hour examination in which the student is expected to justify the proposed research. Successful defense of the dissertation proposal advances the student to candidacy for the degree. Approval of the proposal by the committee is in effect an agreement that if the student completes the proposed research and can justify the conclusions and implications drawn, the dissertation will be approved.

**Final Examination and Defense of the Dissertation**

After the student writes the dissertation and distributes it to members of the dissertation advisory committee, he or she must schedule a two-hour final examination and formal defense of the dissertation. The defense of the dissertation, in which the student justifies the study and conclusions and implications drawn from it, is part of a final examination in which the examining faculty may ask questions regarding any issues related to the student's area of study.
The examination is open to all members of the University community. Successful completion of the final examination and approval of the dissertation is the last academic requirement for earning the doctoral degree.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Students frequently have questions regarding policies, protocol, and procedures in recording progress through the program, selecting an advisor and committee members, examination procedures, and the dissertation. The question-and-answer format is designed to address the most common issues. If you have additional questions, you should first ask your advisor for guidance. If you and your advisor are unsure of how the issue should be resolved, then you should consult the director of doctoral studies in special education or the Curry School’s Associate Dean for Academic and Student Affairs.

Recording Progress Through the Program

Question: What are the events that mark major milestones in my progress through the doctoral program?
Answer: The most significant milestones are: (a) passing the preliminary examination, (b) selecting a program advisor and committee, (c) obtaining approval of a program of study, (d) passing the comprehensive examinations, (e) selecting a dissertation advisor and committee, (f) obtaining approval of the dissertation proposal, and (g) passing the final examination (dissertation defense) and filing the dissertation.

Question: What is a Record of Progress (ROP), where do I get it, and what should I do with it?
Answer: The Record of Progress is a form that you may obtain from the Office of Admissions and Student Affairs in Ruffner Hall or from the Web at http://curry.edschool.virginia.edu/admissions/pdf/. The purpose of the form is to help you and others keep track of your completion of various important steps in the doctoral program. As you complete each step in your program, you will need to obtain the signatures of your advisor and committee members. The first time you will need to complete a section of your ROP and collect signatures is your preliminary examination. You will need to take the ROP to that examination meeting, your dissertation proposal defense, and your final examination (dissertation defense). You will also need to collect the signatures of your program advisory committee when they approve your program of study, and again to indicate that you have passed your comprehensive examinations.

Selecting an Advisor

Question: Why was I assigned a temporary advisor?
Answer: We assign all students a temporary advisor as soon as they have been admitted to the program so that they have a specific person to turn to for guidance from the very beginning of their program. We do not admit a doctoral student unless a faculty member is willing to assume responsibility for him or her as a temporary advisor.
Thus we avoid admitting students in whom no one has a personal interest and for whom no one serves as an advisor and advocate. We make the initial assignment of an advisor temporary to allow the student the option of choosing a different advisor once she or he has completed part of the program and have become better acquainted with all the members of the special education faculty.

**Question:** When may I choose a different advisor?

**Answer:** You may change your advisor at any time during your program. However, if a student makes a change of advisor, it is usually done at one of two decision points in the doctoral program: (a) soon after the preliminary examination (i.e., a new advisor may be chosen for developing a program of studies, replacing the temporary advisor) or (b) soon after the comprehensive exams (i.e., a new advisor may be chosen for the dissertation, replacing the program advisor).

**Question:** Why do students change advisors?

**Answer:** Faculty members understand that it is important for students and their advisors to be compatible in interests, areas of expertise, and philosophical orientation. A student may initiate a change of advisor because another faculty member’s area(s) of interest or research or philosophical orientation on important issues is more in line with her or his own interests, expertise, or professional views on critical issues.

**Question:** How should I handle my choice of advisor with faculty members?

**Answer:** Faculty members are aware that decision points regarding advisors are built into the doctoral program. You should initiate a discussion with your current advisor regarding your intentions at these decision points. If you do not want to change advisors, you should make this clear to your current advisor. If you do want to initiate a change at one of the natural decision points (i.e., following the preliminary or comprehensive exams), then you should first initiate a discussion with the faculty member you hope will serve as your advisor for the next phase(s) of your program. Remember that a faculty member is not required or expected to serve as your advisor just because you ask. The person you ask to serve as your new advisor may want time to consider your request and, perhaps, to discuss the matter with your current advisor. As soon as a faculty member has agreed to serve as your new advisor, you must discuss the change with your current advisor.

**Question:** Why do faculty members sometimes decline to serve as a student’s advisor?

**Answer:** Faculty members who are asked to serve as advisors must consider their other commitments. He or she may decline to advise a student simply to avoid over commitment. Faculty members also must consider whether, from their perspective, they have interests, expertise, and a philosophical orientation that are compatible with the student’s. Consequently, a faculty member whom you ask to serve as your advisor may want to discuss the matter with you in considerable detail and take a reasonable amount of time to weigh the decision to serve as your advisor.
Selecting Committee Members

Question: How do I go about selecting a program committee?
Answer: As soon as you have chosen your advisor for your program of studies (which may or may not be the same person as your temporary advisor), you should discuss with him or her whom you would like to serve on your committee. When you and your advisor have agreed on whom to ask, you should initiate conversations with those individuals, asking them if they are willing to serve as members of your committee.

Question: Why do students make changes in committee members?
Answer: They do so for the same reasons they choose to change advisors. The members of an advisory committee should be interested in at least one major aspect of the student’s course of study or bring particular expertise (perhaps in research methodology) to the student’s dissertation research.

Question: When may I make changes in the membership of my advisory committee?
Answer: You may initiate changes in advisory committee membership at any time. It is unusual, however, for committee membership to be changed, except at the time the student begins work on the dissertation.

Question: How should I approach committee members regarding changes?
Answer: First, you should discuss the matter with your advisor, who may have specific suggestions or recommendations. If you are merely adding a committee member, then it is a matter of asking the faculty member to serve and explaining why you would value his or her membership. If you are dropping a member, you should thank that person for his or her past assistance and explain that you are reconstituting the committee at this point in the program because of a change in the focus of your work.

Question: Why do faculty members sometimes refuse an invitation to serve on a doctoral committee?
Answer: A faculty member may decline to serve on a student’s committee for the same reasons he or she may decline to advise a student. The student’s area of interest and the faculty member’s other commitments are typical reasons that a faculty member may decline.

Preliminary Examination

Question: How are members of examining committees assigned?
Answer: The director of doctoral studies randomly assigns three special education faculty members to serve on the preliminary examination committee, along with your temporary advisor.

Question: Whose responsibility is it to schedule the time and place of the exam?
Answer: You are responsible for contacting each of the committee members to find a mutually acceptable time for the exam. Then it is up to you to reserve, through the Office of Admissions, a room for the exam and to communicate to your examining committee the time and place of the exam.
Question: What must I provide the members of the examining committee?
Answer: Please see the previous section on examinations for the answer.

Question: What should I expect in the exam?
Answer: Your temporary advisor will chair the exam. The exam will include three major parts, each of which will provide members of the committee with the opportunity to ask you questions. First, your advisor will ask you to talk about yourself—to describe, in 5 to 10 min., your professional development to date and your career goals. Second, you will be asked to give a brief (5 to 10 min.) oral synopsis of your paper, with particular attention to the conclusions and implications. Third, you will be asked to provide an oral critique of the research article selected by your advisor. Depending on the complexity of the research you are to critique, you may take 5 to 15 min. for this presentation. If you wish, you may use audio-visual aids (e.g., overhead transparencies, Power Point). Remember that the purpose of the exam is to help the committee assess your professional training and experience to date, your grasp of issues in special education, your ability to express yourself clearly in writing and speaking, and your knowledge of research at this point in your program. Following your presentations and your responses to questions from the committee, your advisor will ask you to step out of the room for a few minutes while the committee discusses your performance and arrives at its recommendations. When your advisor asks you to return (usually within 10 to 20 min.), he or she will inform you of the committee’s recommendations. Within a few days after the examination, your advisor will provide you with a written summary of the committee’s evaluation of your performance and its recommendations.

Question: What are the possible outcomes of the preliminary examination?
Answer: Please see the previous section on examinations for the answer.

Research Requirements

Question: Must I take the Curry School’s research exams for doctoral students?
Answer: No. Each doctoral program area in the Curry School decides whether to require students to take the quantitative and qualitative exams or to meet an approved, alternative requirement. Special education requires, in lieu of a passing score on the exams, passing grades in a minimum of 12 semester hours in research courses, as determined by the student’s committee, and at least one course in each methodology (quantitative and qualitative).

Comprehensive Examinations

Question: When do I take the comprehensive examinations?
Answer: You and your program advisor decide when you are ready for comps. Students typically take comps between their second and third years of full-time study or its equivalent (i.e., for most students, the summer between the second and third years,
after all or nearly all course work has been completed). You must pass your comps before you submit a dissertation proposal to your committee.

**Question:** How are the comp questions constructed?

**Answer:** The construction of the comp questions is the responsibility of your advisor. The focus of the questions will depend in part on the degree program you are in (Ed.D. or Ph.D.), as well as your advisor and committee. Your advisor may solicit questions from other members of your committee or prepare questions for approval of other committee members. You may or may not be involved in determining the nature of the questions, depending on the discretion of your advisor. The important thing to remember is that your advisor is responsible for constructing the comprehensive exams. As the time for your comps approaches, however, you should make a point of discussing both the schedule for and the content of the exams with your advisor. For the Ph.D., one of the questions must involve discussion or application of a research method.

**Question:** How long do I have to complete the comps?

**Answer:** This, too, depends on your advisor and committee. Most advisors in special education prefer to require students to answer two to four questions over a period of 4 to 8 weeks and to have the answers submitted as papers prepared according to APA publication guidelines. In this case, you are allowed to use the library and any other resources you would typically use in preparing a manuscript for publication, a course syllabus, or a grant proposal. If you prefer, however, your advisor may be willing to have you write your comps in the more traditional manner—to write answers to several questions in blocks of time totaling 12-15 hours over a period of two or three days, without access to the library and other resources.

**Question:** Can I study specifically for comps?

**Answer:** Not really. The exams as they are given in special education are not something for which you can “cram.” They are designed specifically to assess your cumulative knowledge, gained from two years of full-time advanced graduate study, and your potential to function as a competent professional with a doctoral degree. In a sense, the comps are a dress rehearsal for the scholarship you will be expected to demonstrate after you have earned the degree.

**Question:** Who reads and evaluates my comps?

**Answer:** All members of your program advisory committee will have the opportunity to read and evaluate all of your answers. As you might expect, however, most members of the committee will defer to those with special expertise on the topic of a particular question. Your advisor will inform you of the outcome of your comps.

**Question:** What happens if I do not complete my comps or fail to meet the minimum expectations?

**Answer:** If you do not complete your comps, you may not proceed to the defense of your dissertation proposal and advancement to degree candidacy. Failure to pass the
comprehensive examinations is governed by policies stated in the Graduate Record and interpreted by the Associate Dean for Academic and Student Affairs.

**Dissertation Proposal**

*Question:* How do I decide what to do for a dissertation?

*Answer:* No one can tell you that! It is something you should start thinking about fairly early in your second year of study. It should be something in which you have an intense interest and something about which you already know quite a bit. You should talk over your ideas with your program advisor (and the person you hope will be your dissertation advisor, if you are contemplating making a change of advisor). Besides your interest in the topic, you should consider the potential importance of the study, its financial cost (and possible sources of funding), the feasibility of conducting the study with resources available to you, and the time it will take to conduct the study.

*Question:* What constitutes an acceptable project for a dissertation?

*Answer:* An acceptable project must be original research addressing an important issue in special education. Within this very general requirement, however, you have great latitude in choosing the type of research you will do and the issue you will study. The research methods you use may be quantitative or qualitative. Your research may be descriptive or experimental. The topic may address a theoretical issue or an issue of practice. Writing a textbook and producing a video are examples of projects that are not acceptable for a dissertation. Producing curriculum materials is not an acceptable dissertation project unless the materials are field-tested and the results analyzed in a manner designed to assess their general effectiveness.

*Question:* What constitutes an acceptable dissertation proposal?

*Answer:* The details of what you need to present to your dissertation committee is something you should discuss with your dissertation advisor. Usually, the committee would like to see a draft of completed chapters 1 (introduction), and 3 (method), and perhaps a competed draft of chapter 2 (review of literature). One of your best strategies in preparing your dissertation proposal is to ask your advisor and committee members for copies of proposals or completed dissertations that they believe are good models.

**Dissertation Defense (Final Examination)**

*Question:* How do I prepare for the defense of my dissertation (final examination)?

*Answer:* Talk with your advisor about how the defense and exam will be structured. Ordinarily, the student gives an verbal presentation of approximately 10 to 20 min., describing the study, results, conclusions, and implications. Then each member of the committee asks questions. The questions are typically focused on the dissertation, but because this is a final examination the committee members may legitimately ask questions about any aspects of the student’s field of study. As in the preliminary examination, after the committee has finished questioning you, your advisor will ask...
you to leave the room while the committee deliberates. Your advisor will then call you back into the room and communicate the committee’s decision.