PFP Doctoral Student Guidelines for the Dissertation Process[1]

Program Plan of Study:

Ph.D. students should complete a doctoral program plan of study during the second semester of their program in a meeting with their temporary mentor and the Ph.D. Program Coordinator.[2] The dissertation time line may begin any time after the program plan of study has been filed. At this time a student may begin to search for and select a dissertation advisor.

The student is responsible for selecting his/her advisor. This individual may be different from the assigned temporary mentor. Prior to choosing an advisor, the student is encouraged to interview and discuss research interests and career goals with several faculty members. The advisor must be a member of the PFP faculty qualified by academic preparation, have graduate faculty status, and have related teaching, work, or research experience. Once the major professor is selected, the Ph.D. student is responsible for completing the **ADVISOR SELECTION FORM** and submitting this document to the Ph.D. Program Coordinator.[3]

Comprehensive Examination:

Comprehensive exams are required of all doctoral students and will be held annually at the end of Spring Semester and prior to the commencement of Summer Session. The Ph.D. student will need to visit with the Comprehensive Exam Coordinator early in their last semester of coursework. The student will take a comprehensive exam to establish candidacy to continue within the doctoral program and progress through the dissertation process. The comprehensive exam must be taken within 12 months of the completion of coursework.

During Research II class students will use secondary data to produce a paper that could be used on the job market. Prior to taking Research II, students who have:

- selected their advisor (filed the Advisor Selection Form with Ph.D. Coordinator)
- identified an approved research topic (approved by Advisor)
- read relevant literature
- identified appropriate theoretical foundation for their research
- identified relevant secondary data
- have permission of both Advisor and Research II professor

may begin working on a preliminary draft of the first essay of their dissertation during Research II class.

STUDENTS SHOULD NOT ASSUME ANY WORK DONE PRIOR TO THE SELECTION OF THEIR DISSERTATION COMMITTEE SHALL NECESSARILY BE A PART OF THEIR DISSERTATION.[4]

Select Dissertation Committee:

The advisory committee is composed of the Advisor (who becomes committee chair) plus other faculty members with relevant areas of skill and/or expertise. The dissertation committee is comprised of five members:

- three from the PFP faculty (major professor plus two other PFP faculty members)

---

[1] These guidelines describe the typical process to complete a three-essay format dissertation. Students interested in a traditional format dissertation should consult with their dissertation committee chair for specifics on the processes to prepare for and complete a traditional format dissertation.

[2] The PFP business assistant will file approved documentation on behalf of the student.

[3] If the student decides to change advisors and/or committee members another form must be completed, signed by all parties, and submitted to the Ph.D. Program Coordinator.

[4] The selection of the dissertation committee is complete when BOTH the Advisor Selection Form and the Committee Selection forms have been filed with the Ph.D. Program Coordinator.

- one outside the PFP Division
- one outside the college (may include outside the university)

The Advisor must be selected prior to, and will direct, the selection of committee members. Committee members should be selected based on complementary skills and expertise related to the proposed dissertation research. Once the Advisor and the Ph.D. student have agreed upon committee members the advisor is responsible for completing the **COMMITTEE SELECTION FORM** and the Ph.D. student is responsible for acquiring all signatures and filing the form with the Ph.D. Program Coordinator.[3] The Advisor becomes the chair of the dissertation committee.

A change in advisor or committee member(s) also requires submission of the necessary forms to the Graduate School. A student is allowed to change his or her advisor at any time during his or her program, but he or she must have the consent of the faculty member who will subsequently serve in that capacity.

Pre-Proposal Presentation (PFP 6101):

Once the student has:

- selected their dissertation committee
- a completed draft of the first dissertation essay
- a completed outline of the second dissertation essay (including preliminary results)
- developed a concept for the third dissertation essay

the student will present this proposal draft during PFP 6101 to solicit feedback from the three PFP committee members, other PFP faculty, and fellow graduate student colleagues in preparation for the proposal defense meeting. The pre-proposal meeting should mirror the proposal meeting (see elements/guidelines below).

At the beginning of the semester the student plans to have the pre-proposal meeting, she (or he) should contact the PFP 6101 instructor and PFP committee members to schedule this meeting. A written copy of the proposal should be provided to the PFP committee members no later than one week prior to the meeting date. Students should encourage all PFP faculty and fellow Ph.D. students to attend their pre-proposal meeting to gain as much feedback as possible.

Students are encouraged to refrain from seeking employment AT LEAST until after completing the pre-proposal meeting.[5]

Proposal Meeting:

A formal meeting of the full committee shall be held to discuss the proposal. The student should provide a completed proposal to the committee chair for approval. Once approved, the committee chair will email the approved proposal to committee members at least one week in advance of the scheduled proposal defense meeting. The complete proposal should contain:

- Introduction
  - Background of research problem and justification of study
  - Purpose and objectives of research study
- Review of literature
  - Include detailed description of literature related to research study (not all literature may end up being cited in all essays)
  - Complete list of references
- Theoretical foundation(s) and/or conceptual framework for the research
- Overview and/or connection of three essays

[5] Faculty recommendations **will not be** provided until the Ph.D. candidate has completed the pre-proposal meeting. A list will be maintained by the Ph.D. coordinator for faculty to check the program status of all Ph.D. students. Faculty members should consult with a student's advisor before supporting any student employment application.

- Presentation of completed first essay (subject to further revision requests from committee members). Please include the following appendices:
    - Condensed codebook of questions, coding, and descriptive statistics (for complete and censored data) on all items selected for use from the secondary data.
    - Copy of program and output files used to create variables and generate results from the secondary data items.
    - Complete specification of all variables used in study
        - Operationalization (match theoretical concept to variable(s) selected/created from data for empirical use)
        - Measurement (how each variable is specifically measured for empirical use)
        - Descriptive statistics for all variables
    - One-page description of secondary data source used.
    - One-page description, explanation, justification of statistical techniques used.
- Outline of all sections for second essay
    - including empirical model and preliminary results (if using secondary data)
    - including survey draft and details on data collection (if using primary data)
- Well-developed concept and rationale for third essay
- Any other documentation requested by committee member(s)

At the meeting, students are expected to make a brief (30-40 minute) presentation to the full committee to summarize the proposal. Other members of the university community are invited to the presentation portion of the proposal defense; the remainder of the meeting will be with the committee members only. The committee will ask questions and provide feedback to the student. The student should be prepared to defend all elements within the dissertation research proposal document. After the proposal meeting, students should make any necessary changes to the proposal and send a revised copy to the committee chair. The committee chair will then send a revised plan of action to the committee members for their approval. Once a plan of action is agreed upon, this final proposal shall be signed off on by all members of the dissertation committee. The student will then be eligible to continue working on completing the dissertation research.

Students are required to remain on campus AT LEAST until after the successful defense of their proposal. No PFP faculty members will agree to serve on dissertation committees for students who leave campus prior to completing a successful proposal meeting. It is in the best interest of the student to remain on campus until the dissertation process has been completed.[6]

Dissertation Process:

Students should work independently, in consultation with committee chair and relevant committee members (as per the approval of the Advisor), on completing the dissertation research as outlined in the final proposal. Any changes to the final proposal should be agreed upon by the committee and documented.

The dissertation process should be completed as follows:

1. Any changes to the first essay should be completed
    a. The completed first paper should be submitted to the committee chair
    b. Upon the chair's approval, the revised first essay will be provided to committee members for their feedback
2. The second essay should be completed
    a. The completed first paper should be submitted to the committee chair
    b. Upon the chair's approval, the revised second essay will be provided to committee members for their feedback

[6] Faculty will place a priority on working with resident students.

3. The third essay should be completed
    a. The completed first paper should be submitted to the committee chair
    b. Upon the chair's approval, the revised third essay will be provided to committee members for their feedback
4. The introductory, literature review, theoretical, and summary chapters should be completed, in consultation with the committee chair.

Once the dissertation process is complete, it is the student's responsibility to schedule the pre-defense meeting with the internal (PFP) dissertation committee members.

Pre-Defense Meeting:

A meeting of the internal (PFP) committee members shall be held to determine readiness for the dissertation defense. Other members of the university community are invited to attend this meeting at the discretion of the committee. The student should provide a completed dissertation to the internal committee members at least two weeks in advance of the scheduled pre-defense meeting. Students are expected to be ready to defend and justify their research. The complete dissertation should contain:

- Introduction
    - Background of research problem and justification of study
    - Purpose and objectives of research study
- Review of literature
    - Include detailed description of literature related to research
    - Complete list of references
- Theoretical foundation(s) and/or conceptual framework(s) for the research
- Overview and/or connection of three essays
- Three essays. Please include the following appendices:
    - Condensed codebook of questions, coding, and descriptive statistics (for complete and censored data) on all items selected for use from the data (secondary and/or primary).
    - Copy of program and output files used to create variables and generate results from the data.
    - Complete specification of all variables used in study
        - Operationalization (match theoretical concept to variable(s) selected/created from data for empirical use)
        - Measurement (how each variable is specifically measured for empirical use)
        - Descriptive statistics for all variables
    - One-page description of data source(s) used.
    - One-page description, explanation, justification of statistical techniques used.
    - IRB approval letter, if applicable.
- Conclusion
    - Summary of results and implications from all three essays as they relate to the purpose and objectives of the research study.

During this meeting, students may be asked to revise sections of the dissertation. At the conclusion of this meeting, it will be determined if the student is ready to proceed with the dissertation defense.

Dissertation Defense:

Upon recommendation by the internal committee members, it is the student's responsibility to schedule the formal dissertation defense meeting. The student should provide a complete and revised dissertation to the full dissertation committee at least two weeks in advance of the scheduled defense meeting. Students are expected to make a 45-minute presentation to describe the dissertation research.[7] All members of the university

[7] Suggested guidelines are—Introduction: 5-10 minutes, Three Essays: 10 minutes each, Summary: 5-10 minutes)

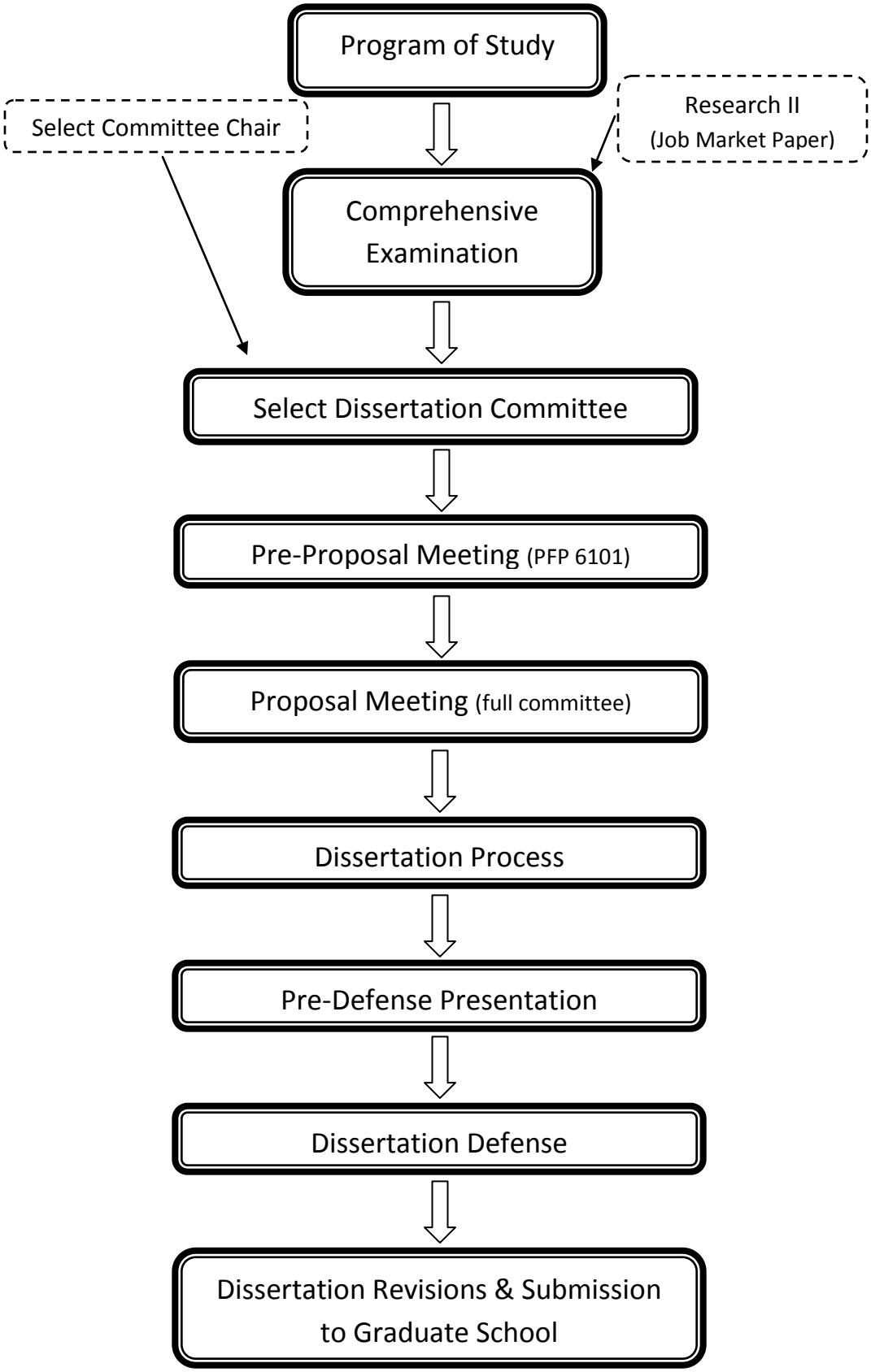
community are invited to attend at least the presentation portion of the dissertation defense; all committee members must be present at the dissertation defense. The complete and revised dissertation should contain:

- Introduction
  - Background of research problem and justification of study
  - Purpose and objectives of research study
- Review of literature
  - Include detailed description of literature related to research
  - Complete list of references
- Theoretical foundation(s) and/or conceptual framework(s) for the research
- Overview and/or connection of three essays
- Three essays.
- Conclusion
  - Summary of results and implications from all three essays as they relate to the purpose and objectives of the research study.
- Please include the following appendices for committee members (not necessarily submitted to graduate school):
  - Condensed codebook of questions, coding, and descriptive statistics (for complete and censored data) on all items selected for use from the data (secondary and/or primary).
  - Copy of program and output files used to create variables and generate results from the data.
  - Complete specification of all variables used in study
    - Operationalization (match theoretical concept to variable(s) selected/created from data for empirical use)
    - Measurement (how each variable is specifically measured for empirical use)
    - Descriptive statistics for all variables
  - One-page description of data source(s) used.
  - One-page description, explanation, justification of statistical techniques used.

Students are expected to:

- provide a professional, well-rehearsed presentation
- respond to all questions and feedback appropriately
- maintain a professional and scholarly demeanor throughout the defense process
- be prepared to make revisions based on the committee's feedback

Doctoral Dissertation Time Line



Personal Financial Planning Division
September, 2010.