

**ORAL EXAM OF THE PH.D. DISSERTATION PROPOSAL  
(PH.D. QUALIFYING EXAMINATION) FOR 2009-2010**

Revised July 2009

Dear Ph.D. Student:

Congratulations upon completing your comprehensive exam and reaching the final stage of the requirements for the Ph.D. degree. The administration of the Warner School is committed to supporting your completion of the oral examination of your dissertation proposal, i.e., the Ph.D. Qualifying Examination.

Below is a summary of the key procedures required for the dissertation proposal examination at the Warner School. Brenda Grosswirth, Administrator in the Office of Student Services (Dewey Hall 2-161), will be glad to answer questions about these procedures. We encourage you to telephone her at 585-275-1009 with your questions; her E-mail address is [bgrosswirth@warner.rochester.edu](mailto:bgrosswirth@warner.rochester.edu).

Although you will be working with Brenda, it is important to understand that the Office of the University Dean of Graduate Studies (585-275-9093) oversees and coordinates the work for the Ph.D. degree in all graduate schools of the University.

We have organized the key procedures in sequential order—with checklists—in order to make it easier for you to complete all of the steps required. Each of the major sets of instructions is printed separately for your convenience. They are as follows:

- Style of the Dissertation Proposal & Dissertation (page 2)
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- SAMPLE 1 (at end of document)
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## STYLE OF THE DISSERTATION PROPOSAL & DISSERTATION

You are responsible for adhering to the University's document on regulations regarding the preparation of the dissertation, **The Preparation of Doctoral Theses**. It contains details on the arrangement of the dissertation, the physical form of the dissertation, and other information that is vital to the preparation process. This document was prepared by the Office of the University Dean of Graduate Studies. **The Preparation of Doctoral Theses** is available at [www.rochester.edu/theses/](http://www.rochester.edu/theses/).

The Office of the University Dean **carefully and thoroughly** checks the dissertation for all of the elements reviewed in the document, **The Preparation of Doctoral Theses**. Therefore, if you have questions regarding information provided in the document, please telephone the Office of the University Dean at 585-275-9093.

Please consult with your dissertation sponsor on any additional style manual that may be used for your dissertation. The Office of the University Dean of Graduate Studies recommends the "Chicago Manual of Style," however other style manuals certainly can be used, e.g., *APA*. **Please be aware that you are responsible for adherence to one style manual. However, please understand that the style manual does not supersede The Preparation of Doctoral Theses.**

Finally, there is no longer a maximum number of words for the Ph.D. dissertation abstract.

## HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW

You, as Investigator, are ultimately responsible for the safe and ethical conduct of your research. The University's Research Subjects Review Board (RSRB) is intended to assist you, as Investigator, in this responsibility. Investigators who are planning a study involving human subjects must prepare an application package that includes a protocol/study design, **Information Letters and/or Consent Forms, Study Measures, and Institutional Approval Letters**, and then submit that application electronically via the RSRB website. **All documents must be uploaded and submitted electronically through the RSRB system.** The University's RSRB must assess proposals involving human subjects, to ensure that adequate mechanisms are in place for the protection of the rights and welfare of human research subjects.

The process for obtaining approval for research involving human subjects and the procedure for submitting an on-line application can be found in the **Forms** section at:

[www.rochester.edu/warner/currentstudents](http://www.rochester.edu/warner/currentstudents)

Please see "Human Subjects Research Instructions."

The Warner School has an internal review process that provides guidance in preparing these materials prior to RSRB review. You and your dissertation sponsor must complete an "Evaluation for Scientific Merit for Dissertations Involving Human Subjects" (**FORM C, at end of document**), and then submit that form to Constance Smith, Warner School of Education (Dewey Hall 1-206A). Procedural questions can be directed to Constance at 585-276-4781 or at csmith@warner.rochester.edu.

Students often must make revisions to the dissertation proposal after passing the dissertation proposal examination, and therefore you are encouraged to discuss with your dissertation sponsor the exact time to undertake the RSRB process.

## BEFORE INITIATING THE DISSERTATION PROPOSAL EXAM

The dissertation proposal oral exam process cannot begin until—

- the comprehensive exam has been passed
- the required credit hours of coursework for the Ph.D. degree have been completed
- all required credit hours of coursework for the Ph.D. degree have received grades—however, grades for ED 595, “Ph.D. Dissertation Research,” may be submitted by your dissertation sponsor after the dissertation is complete (contact the University Office of the Registrar at 585-275-5131 to obtain an official transcript)
- all University and Warner School debts have been paid (contact the University Office of the Bursar at 585-275-3931)
- your registration is current **and** has been maintained continuously from the semester of matriculation (contact the University Office of the Registrar at 585-275-5131 to obtain an official transcript)
- your dissertation committee has been approved (see **Formation of the Ph.D. Dissertation Committee**, available from the Warner School reception window, the Office of Student Services, or from the Warner website)

## INITIATING THE DISSERTATION PROPOSAL EXAM

Your dissertation committee members must approve your proposal and agree it is ready for oral examination. They do this by adding their signatures to FORM A (attached at end of document).

Then, please bring the following to Brenda Grosswirth in Dewey Hall 2-161F:

- ❑ FORM A (attached at end of document), with **signatures** of committee members and **names** of committee members (typed, word-processed, or printed legibly). The Office of Student Services will obtain the approval of the Associate Dean.
- ❑ Two copies of the abstract, with abstract cover sheet (SAMPLE 1, attached at end of document).
- ❑ Two copies of the proposal, with proposal cover sheet (SAMPLE 2, attached at end of document). These copies of the proposal must be stapled, paper-clipped, or in envelopes.

## **APPOINTMENT OF READER/INDEPENDENT CHAIR, APPROVAL OF PROPOSAL, AND SCHEDULING OF EXAM**

Following submission of all required materials (see page 5) to Brenda Grosswirth in the Office of Student Services, 2-161 Dewey Hall—

- ❑ The Warner School's Associate Dean appoints a Reader/Independent Chair for your dissertation proposal. The function of the Reader/Independent Chair is (1) to determine if the proposal is ready for examination and (2) to conduct the proposal examination itself.
- ❑ Brenda Grosswirth contacts both you and your sponsor to announce the Reader/Independent Chair.
- ❑ The Reader/Independent Chair has three (3) weeks to read your proposal, prepare written comments, and present those comments to the Office of Student Services.
- ❑ If the comments indicate that there are fundamental problems with your proposal, and if the Associate Dean concurs with this assessment, then **revisions** to the proposal must be made and **two copies of the revised proposal must be resubmitted** to Brenda Grosswirth in the Office of Student Services. The Associate Dean will then resubmit the revised proposal to the Reader/Independent chair for his/her approval.
- ❑ If the **original comments** submitted by the Reader/Independent Chair indicate that your dissertation proposal is ready to be examined (or when the Reader/Independent Chair has approved the required revisions—see item immediately above), Brenda Grosswirth notifies both you and your sponsor that the proposal is ready for examination. The comments are then distributed to both you and your committee members.
- ❑ It is now your responsibility to arrange two possible examination days, dates, and times with your committee members (**not with the Reader/Independent Chair**). **The dates must be different from one another.** Enter the days, dates, and times on FORM B (attached at end of document); complete the remainder of FORM B; and then submit FORM B to Brenda Grosswirth. **(If revisions to the proposal were required, the submission of FORM B must be accompanied by one copy of your revised proposal.)**
- ❑ The Office of Student Services selects one of the two possible examination dates, and announces the examination day, date, time, and location in a memorandum that is mailed to you, committee members, and the Reader/Independent Chair.
- ❑ You must provide each member of your dissertation committee (**not the Reader/Independent Chair**) with a clean copy of the dissertation proposal that will be examined. This means that if the proposal has been revised on instructions from the Reader/Independent Chair and the revisions subsequently approved by the Reader/Independent Chair, copies of this **revised** proposal must be provided to each member of your committee. **It is imperative that each member of your committee has an identical copy of your proposal, i.e., a copy identical to the final copy submitted to Brenda Grosswirth in the Office of Student Services, whether that is the original proposal or the revised proposal.**

## CONDUCT OF THE PROPOSAL EXAMINATION

- The purposes of the oral examination of the proposal are to determine (a) the significance of your proposal, (b) the adequacy of your research plan, (c) the availability of needed resources to conduct your research, and (d) your competence to pursue the proposed dissertation.
- Attendance at the exam is limited to the following:
  - (a) the student
  - (b) the dissertation committee
  - (c) the Reader/Independent Chair
  - (d) faculty members and other persons—with the approval of the Warner School Associate Dean's Office, the sponsor, the Reader/Independent Chair, and the student
- Procedures for conducting your exam are at the discretion of the Reader/Independent Chair and your dissertation committee. These procedures are usually agreed upon immediately preceding the examination. You may be asked to leave the room while the procedures are being discussed.
- At the conclusion of the exam, you will be asked to leave the room while the committee deliberates and votes in camera to recommend "pass" or "fail." The Reader/Independent Chair does not have a vote, but records both the committee's recommendations and committee members' comments on the report form provided by the Office of Student Services. The Reader/Independent Chair adds his/her own comments, if desired. (These comments may include observations regarding the conduct of the exam by the committee; compliments to the student; inadequacies of the study; comments on the student's responses during the exam; and any recommendations for the student to follow, including a possible revision of the proposal or the conduct of the research.)
- You then will be asked to return to the examination room to learn the outcome of the exam and the comments of your committee members. The Reader/Independent Chair is responsible for reading these comments.
- For cases in which there is not unanimous approval by the dissertation committee, the final decision rests with the Associate Dean. The advice of the Academic Policy Committee may be requested by the Associate Dean.
- In the case of a student failing the examination, reexamination will be allowed unless the dissertation committee, with the concurrence of the Associate Dean, rules that no reexamination will be allowed.

**REPORTING RESULTS OF THE EXAMINATION,  
ADMISSION TO CANDIDACY,  
AND ELAPSE OF TIME UNTIL FINAL DEFENSE**

- After the examination, the Reader/Independent Chair sends his/her report, which includes the committee's recommendations, to the Warner School Office of Student Services. Following approval by the Associate Dean, you will receive official notification (by letter) of the examination results. Both you and the members of your committee will receive a copy of the Reader/Independent Chair's report.
- Upon confirmation that you have passed the proposal examination, you are advanced to candidacy for the Ph.D. degree. The University Dean of Graduate Studies will issue a certificate attesting to this candidacy. You then proceed with the dissertation, guided by your committee.

(If the committee stipulates "pass, contingent upon required revisions," it is the responsibility of the dissertation sponsor to write a letter to the Associate Dean stating if and when the revisions have been completed. It is the student's responsibility to distribute a revised copy of the proposal to each committee member and the Office of Student Services. The student will then be advanced to candidacy for the Ph.D. degree and will receive a certificate attesting to this candidacy. The student then proceeds with the dissertation, guided by the committee.)

- A minimum of six (6) months must elapse between completion of your proposal exam and the scheduling of your final defense.
- The document that details the requirements for the final defense of the dissertation, **Registration and Final Defense of the Ph.D. Dissertation**, is available from the Warner School reception window, the Office of Student Services, or from the Warner website.

Attachments: FORM A (Committee Approval and Sign-Off for the Ph.D. Dissertation Proposal and Abstract)  
FORM B (Ph.D. Dissertation Proposal Examination Scheduling)  
FORM C (Evaluation for Scientific Method for Dissertations Involving Human Subjects)  
SAMPLE 1 (Abstract Cover Page)  
SAMPLE 2 (Dissertation Proposal Cover Page)

**FORM A**

**COMMITTEE APPROVAL AND SIGN-OFF  
FOR THE PH.D. DISSERTATION PROPOSAL AND ABSTRACT**

I approve the dissertation proposal and abstract of \_\_\_\_\_,  
(student's name)

and agree that this proposal and abstract are ready for examination.

<b>Signatures of Committee</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Names of Committee</b> (typed, word-processed, or printed <u>legibly</u> )
_____ (Sponsor)	_____	_____ (Sponsor)
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____ (if applicable)	_____	_____ (if applicable)

\*\*\*\*\*  
The Warner School's Office of Student Services will obtain the approval below.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Approved: Associate Dean**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

**FORM B**

**PH.D. DISSERTATION PROPOSAL EXAMINATION SCHEDULING**

The dissertation proposal examination of \_\_\_\_\_  
(student's name)  
may be held on either of the dates listed below—the dates must be different from one another:

First Choice: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Day) (Date—different from the one below) (Time: 2-hour slot)

Second Choice: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Day) (Date—different from the one above) (Time: 2-hour slot)

Both of the dates above are agreeable to all members of my dissertation committee. I understand that I am **not** to check these dates with the Reader/Independent Chair. **Also, I understand that it is my responsibility to provide members of my committee (not the Reader/Independent Chair) with identical, clean copies of the dissertation proposal that will be examined, that is, the final copy submitted to Brenda Grosswirth, whether that is the original proposal or the revised proposal.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Student's signature)

Names of dissertation committee members (typed, word-processed, or printed legibly):

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Sponsor)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
(if applicable)

## FORM C

### EVALUATION FOR SCIENTIFIC MERIT FOR DISSERTATIONS INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS

**This form should be submitted to Constance Smith at the Warner School of Education, in Dewey Hall 1-206A.**

In accordance with Federal guidelines, the University has established a system of ethical review boards (RSRB) to review research projects involving human subjects, including dissertation studies. Prior to submitting a dissertation research protocol to RSRB for approval, the student's dissertation sponsor must first attest to the "scientific merit" of the proposed study.

To be completed by Doctoral Candidate:

Candidate Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Sponsor's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Proposal Title: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
EPRP#: \_\_\_\_\_ Expiration Date: \_\_\_\_\_

To be completed by Dissertation Sponsor:

Please use the following criteria as evidence of scientific merit:

- This research uses procedures consistent with sound research design.
- The investigator is qualified and has the time and resources to conduct the research.
- The research method is sufficiently sound to reasonably expect that the research question will be answered.
- The knowledge expected to result from this study is sufficiently important/needed.
- The data monitoring plan is appropriate to safeguard the rights and welfare of subjects.
- The use of healthy volunteers or vulnerable subjects, if any, is appropriate.
- Any Conflict of Interest issues have been addressed according to University Policy.

I attest that I have reviewed the proposal for scientific merit as described above and believe that this proposal meets the criteria.

Sponsor's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**This form should be submitted to Constance Smith at the Warner School of Education, in Dewey Hall 1-206A.**

**SAMPLE 1**

ABSTRACT

An Evaluation of an Elementary Teacher Education Program

by

Sara Smith

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the

Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

Supervised by

Professor Jane Andrews

Margaret Warner Graduate School of Education and Human Development

University of Rochester  
Rochester, New York

2010

**SAMPLE 2**

An Evaluation of an Elementary Teacher Education Program

by

Sara Smith

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the

Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

Supervised by

Professor Jane Andrews

Margaret Warner Graduate School of Education and Human Development

University of Rochester  
Rochester, New York

2010