



Guide to Ph.D. Program Requirements

Department of Family Social Science, University of Minnesota

Introduction

On the way to earning a Ph.D., students complete a number of program requirements other than formal courses. These include the Research Practicum, Preliminary Written Examination (which consists of the Critical Review Paper and Special Paper), Preliminary Oral Examination, Dissertation Proposal Meeting, and Final Oral Examination. The Graduate School has regulations regarding all Ph.D. programs on campus. Students are responsible for knowing and following the procedures and rules in the *Graduate School Catalog*. This *Guide to Program Requirements* discusses the implementation of the Graduate School's requirements in the Department of Family Social Science.

Advising

Doctoral students entering the program will be assigned an intake adviser by the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS). The intake adviser will guide the student's first year of study in the program. By the beginning of the second year in the doctoral program, students will identify the three "inside" members of their official doctoral committee. These three Family Social Science (FSoS) faculty will guide the student's completion of the Critical Review Paper and evaluate the paper upon its completion. This committee will also conduct the student's annual review meeting until the student has completed the Preliminary Oral Examination (and is a doctoral candidate).

The three departmental committee members and one "outside" member will constitute the student's official doctoral committee, which is recommended to the Graduate School when the student's program of study is filed with the Graduate School. The four-person dissertation committee will then conduct the Preliminary Oral Examination, Dissertation Proposal Meeting, and Final Oral Examination. Continuity of committee membership is desirable for the Preliminary Oral Examination, Dissertation Proposal Meeting, and Final Oral Examination.

It is recognized that students' topics may change, faculty may become unavailable, or more appropriate faculty may be available, necessitating a change in the committee membership. Regardless of committee oversight, the student's adviser has the ultimate responsibility for communicating with the student, monitoring the student's progress, knowing the student, mentoring the student, and holding the student to department, Graduate School, and university rules.

Preparing for the Evaluation of First Year Graduate Students

At least two weeks prior to the April or May graduate faculty meeting at which first year students will be evaluated, a first year student should provide her or his advisor with the following:

- A list of your academic accomplishments in the program (courses taken and grades; class projects and major papers; summary of research

and/or teaching experiences; a summary of any special academic honors or experiences you have had this year).

- A Professional and Personal Assessment (your professional and personal goals as stated when entering the program; your self-assessment of progress toward those goals; an outline of plans to achieve remaining goals; changes in goals (if any) and their implications for your future work here; personal comments on your experiences in the department so far.

Research Practicum with Faculty Members

All graduate students are expected to develop competencies in planning and conducting research by participating in one or more research projects. The research practicum involves working with faculty members on research. Students are encouraged to work with several faculty members during the duration of their graduate study and can receive credit for this work by enrolling in Directed Study or Directed Research courses.

Basic Computer Competencies

The graduate faculty recommends that all graduate students become familiar with the following computer uses early in their programs. These basic skills will be important to master for use in your writing, class assignments, and research projects. Most students will need computer skills that exceed those listed here.

Word Processing

- creating, editing, printing, saving, spell checking a document
- basic document formatting i.e., margins, spacing, bold, underlining, centering, etc.
- text manipulation i.e., moving, copying, indenting, etc.

Information Retrieval

- *Lumina*
access information via CD-ROM
perform library searches
download references/abstracts
access and use indexes available on the university library website
- *Internet*
access information via world wide web

Communication

- send and receive e-mail
- send and receive files (attachments)
- access bulletin boards, listservs, and newsgroups

Knowledge of Statistical Package (SPSS for Windows)

- creation of file definition programs, format for reading data
- issues and techniques for data cleaning
- data transformations (recodes, computes)
- generation and printing of statistical output

These skills may be attained in many ways. The research and statistical skills are taught in formal Family Social Science classes at the 5000 and 8000 levels and through classes in departments such as Educational Psychology and Sociology. The computer skills may be attained through workshops offered every semester by the university's computing offices and by using various manuals available through the department. Questions about these skills should be directed to the departmental Information Technology Coordinator.

Preliminary Written Examination

The Preliminary Written Examination consists of two parts: the Critical Review Paper and the Special Paper. After these papers have been passed and the student notified the paperwork has been sent to the Graduate School, students may schedule the Preliminary Oral Examination with the Graduate School.

Critical Review Paper

The **Critical Review Paper** is the first part of the Preliminary Written Examination for the Ph.D. Students will write the Critical Review Paper following the established timeline. The **purpose** of the paper is for the student to provide evidence of the breadth and depth of his/her knowledge and understanding in a particular content area of family social science that is of special interest.

Students will choose the content area and complete an extensive review of the body of literature. The review will include theory, research, and practice for a decade of time or longer. Students will report in a succinct fashion the results and conclusions of these studies, articles, and books. The paper should **critique** the theoretical and methodological approaches, including the implicit values and assumptions, and missing questions and answers, as well as the applications of these theories and methods in education, policy, and/or intervention. Based on the reported results and critique, students will outline the implications for research, education, policy, therapy and/or other applications in a manner that demonstrates breadth, depth, creativity, and intelligence. The paper may be background for dissertation research.

Timing of the Critical Review Paper

Started in the second semester. Ph.D. students who enter the program with a Master's degree will schedule a meeting with their three-person Family Social Science committee prior to May 16 of the first year (second semester) of their doctoral program. Students in the MA/PhD track will be scheduled for a meeting with their three-person Family Social Science committee members prior to the end of the second semester following their change of status paperwork being submitted (second semester of their doctoral program). The topic for the paper will be agreed upon at the end of the committee meeting, and ideally, the critical review application will be submitted.

Completed in the third semester. The critical review paper is due no later than the last day of examinations for the following semester (If entering with a Master's degree, the student's first semester of the second academic year. If entering with a Bachelor's degree, the student's third semester as a doctoral student).

Maintaining good standing in the program. Students who complete these two steps on schedule will be making satisfactory progress and will remain in good standing. Students who do not complete these two steps will receive a letter of concern from the Director of Graduate Studies that will be placed in their file. In addition, they will move to lower priority to receive funding through teaching and research assistantships. Students who have not finished the critical review by the end of the second year will receive a hold on registration for not having passed the qualifying exam.

Rules for Doing the Critical Review Paper

1. The student may consult with the whole committee about the topic, scope, delimitations, and potential references to use in writing the critical review. The committee may meet to discuss the application from the student. If the committee desires, it is acceptable to make modifications to the scope of the review or references to be used. This consultation is an optional step.
2. The student may work with one member of the committee (usually the adviser) on the outline for the paper. The student may give one member of the committee (usually the adviser) a draft of the critical review prior to submitting it to the full committee for evaluation. The feedback is not an approval or disapproval of the project. This feedback request is not required and is restricted to one committee member, and one review.
3. The maximum number of pages for the critical review is 30 double-spaced pages (one-inch margins), excluding references and appendices. The font should be 12 point.
4. The minimum number of studies to be reviewed is 12, although the committee may vary these instructions in special circumstances. There is no maximum number for studies that could be reviewed.

Evaluation of the Critical Review Paper

The student should turn in three copies of the critical review to Roberta Daigle by the last day of examination week in the semester it is to be turned in. The faculty committee members will receive and evaluate the review. The three-person committee must meet as a group to discuss the evaluation and to arrive at a shared understanding of the strengths and limitations, and whether it is satisfactory. A decision that the critical review paper is satisfactory must

have the agreement of at least two of the committee members. Students can expect the committee to meet regarding the decision within the first six weeks of the following semester.

Students who fail the critical review will be allowed to revise and resubmit it once. Faculty committees may suggest course work or areas of learning the student would need to complete prior to the second submission of the paper. Students failing the second evaluation of the critical review will not be permitted to continue in the Ph.D. program.

Date for Implementing the Policy

The policy outlined above is effective Fall 2005.

Special Paper

The Special Paper gives doctoral students experience with writing for publication in the family field, receiving constructive editorial feedback, and working with that feedback until a consensus of the reviewers has indicated that the written product is acceptable. The Special Paper is a paper reflecting a focused area of competency related to the family field. It must involve family content, utilize theories and methods used in the family field, and have implications for family issues. The paper must be scholarly in nature rather than written for a lay audience. Acceptable projects include empirical research, theoretical articles, and scholarly literature reviews. The final version of the paper should be publishable in a scholarly outlet, in the judgment of the graduate faculty. However, actual publication is not a program requirement.

The Special Paper provides evidence of the student's research knowledge and experience prior to designing the dissertation research project. **The faculty evaluating the Special Paper will be able to see the ability to focus the paper appropriately, conceptual accuracy and sophistication, methodological accuracy and sophistication, organizational coherence, precision and clarity of writing, and technical accuracy. Integration may be indicated by explicit, logical linkage across theory, research, and application.**

The criteria established for evaluation of the Special Paper include the following: addresses important issues of family sciences; presents an appropriate conceptual basis, demonstrates methodological soundness, offers thoughtful discussion of results, demonstrates quality in written presentation.

The Special Paper may be an aspect of the content area chosen for the Critical Review Paper but does not have to be so. It would need to be clearly focused in a way that is appropriate for publication. If the Masters' thesis were to be chosen as a basis for the Special Paper, then it would require more than condensing the length of the text. It would require additional work, such as data analysis, interpretation, and additional application. If the student's master's thesis was not an empirical research project, the Special Paper must be one.

The Special Paper may be based on work completed at the University of Minnesota or elsewhere, but approval of the Family Social Science graduate faculty is required. Prior publication or acceptability by other individuals, committees, or editorial gate-keepers does not guarantee acceptance by the FSoS graduate faculty. The Special Paper may involve co-authors, but the student's contribution must be substantial enough to merit sole or first authorship. Criteria for determining authorship are discussed in the APA Publication Manual. A doctoral student who

completed a master's degree without a research thesis must complete a research project for the Special Paper.

The proposal for the special paper is to be submitted to the Examination and Evaluation (E&E) committee for pre-screening in order to check for scope and relevance. The completed paper should be submitted to the E&E Committee for review when the student feels it is ready. The review will be based on outlined criteria established by the graduate faculty according to the above purposes. The committee will include three readers, none of whom may have a conflict of interest with the student's written paper (e.g., none of the reviewers should be a co-author or should be the director of the data set the student used.) A student's adviser may be an evaluator if no conflict of interest is present. The E&E Committee chair will appoint reading committees, taking into account the subject matter expertise of faculty and distribution of workload. A decision that the Special Paper is satisfactory will be based on the positive evaluation of all three faculty readers. The decision would not require that committee members meet. Students could revise and resubmit until it is acceptable. The decision of acceptance would then allow the student to proceed to the Preliminary Oral Examination. The paper should be submitted to a journal, but would not have to be accepted for publication. After successful completion of the Special Paper, forms will be filed with the graduate school to indicate successful completion of the Preliminary Written Examination.

The subject and approach chosen for the Special Paper must be approved **in advance** by your adviser and the Examination and Evaluation Committee. The Application for Special Project Paper is available online at the FSoS website. You are required to select an appropriate scholarly outlet (e.g., refereed journal, edited volume) for your paper and to submit with the application a copy of the **Instruction to Authors** page and **two sample articles** from previous years' issues of that journal or volume. These articles need not be similar in content to your proposed Special Paper. Rather, if approved, they will serve as guidelines for the general approach, format, and style of the Paper. If your choice is judged to be inappropriate, you will be asked to select another publication outlet and/or type of project. Pre-approval requests will be reviewed promptly by the Examination and Evaluation Committee, typically within one week of submission (during the academic year).

Students who turn in their Special Paper by October 15 for fall semester and March 15 for spring semester will guarantee a review by faculty and still leave time for minor revisions prior to the beginning of the next semester. This should allow the student with a well written Special Paper to schedule their Preliminary Oral Examination the following semester.

Students who turn in their Special Paper on dates later during the semester should not expect to schedule their Preliminary Oral during the first two weeks of the next semester, especially not fall semester. Also students who require more than minor revisions may not be able to schedule their Preliminary Oral during the first two weeks of the next semester.

Evaluation

The Special Paper will be considered successfully completed when the following criteria have been met:

- The paper is of high quality and scholarly in tone, using a standard format that is followed by major journals (such as the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*.)
- The paper is judged satisfactory on the evaluation criteria listed on the attached document "Criteria for Evaluation of the Special Paper."

The paper must be judged satisfactory by at least three faculty readers, one of whom is selected by the student. Other readers are selected by the Examination and Evaluation Committee. (Note: A faculty member who is working with the student on research reported in the Special Paper or whose research data are used for the Special Paper cannot be an evaluator, since this could be a conflict of interest.) All three readers must agree for the Special Paper to be considered a "Pass." Approval of the Special Paper by the faculty is decided without regard to whether the paper had already been published or approved for publication. In the past, students have had to revise specials despite the fact that they had been published elsewhere.

Other outcomes include the following:

- **Pass with Completed Revisions:** If the readers agree that the paper is generally acceptable with revisions, then it will be returned to you for the appropriate revisions. This outcome means that the Special has "passed," but that the revisions must be made to the readers' satisfaction before the project is judged to have been completed. This is used for minor revisions.
- **Revise and Reconsider:** If the readers feel that the paper requires a significant amount of reworking and that the final outcome will depend on the revised paper, the manuscript and readers' comments will be returned to you for the appropriate revisions. The changes must be made to the readers' satisfaction before the project is judged to have been completed.
- **Fail:** On first submission or following a "Revise and Reconsider" decision, if consensus does not emerge among readers, the paper will be submitted to additional readers. If any three readers agree that the paper is not acceptable, then you will be asked to select another subject for the Special Paper.

Just as with the review of a journal article, one revision may not necessarily lead to completion of the paper. In fact, sometimes a revised manuscript clarifies some points but makes other problems more apparent to the reviewers. If you have questions about the meaning of individual reviewers' comments, you should consult each reviewer directly. If you have questions about how to deal with the set of reviewers' comments, then you should consult the Chair of the Examination and Evaluation Committee.

Preliminary Oral Examination

This is scheduled after you have passed the written preliminary exam (Critical Review and Special Paper).

The **Preliminary Oral Examination** will be focused on the coursework on the students doctoral program, the Critical Review Paper and on the Special Paper. This two-hour meeting will include the student and the four members of his/her officially appointed committee (three FSoS faculty and one faculty member from outside the department.)

The Examination must cover the content of the major field and minor field or supporting program. It is an opportunity for the student to **clearly articulate his/her knowledge of the fields of study and the various ways of knowing, explain how his/her previous works were located in the greater literature of the field, and to identify the nature of the unique contributions. The faculty may examine on anything important in the field and on the**

student's degree program, consistent with the policy of the Graduate School. Faculty members would be able to assess research readiness for focused inquiry. The student will then be prepared to start work on the dissertation proposal and the credits required for the dissertation process. Forms are then filed with the Graduate School, indicating that the Preliminary Oral Examination has been completed. Once these forms have been filed, the student is considered a "Doctoral Candidate," or "All But Dissertation" (ABD).

Dissertation Proposal Meeting

The **Dissertation Proposal Meeting** will be held to examine the feasibility of the study design and the supporting theoretical ideas and to revise them as needed. This meeting will include all members of the student's official doctoral committee, as appointed by the Graduate School. The student will present a detailed overview of the study (equivalent to chapter one of the dissertation) and a detailed plan for the method/methodology (equivalent to chapter three of the dissertation). The meeting concludes with the agreement of the committee that the proposal is acceptable or unacceptable for initiation. A Family Social Science form is signed by all committee members when the student is ready to proceed with the dissertation. In cases where the proposal was not acceptable to the committee, the student would revise it and then get the adviser's approval before resubmitting to the committee. It would probably be necessary for the committee to convene in order for all persons to receive the same information at the same time and to make a decision. Once the proposal is approved, Human Subjects (IRB) approval will be required prior to initiation of data collection and/or use of secondary data.

Final Oral Examination

The Final Oral Examination covers the defense of the doctoral dissertation as well as other aspects of the student's knowledge in the field of Family Social Science. Prior to scheduling the Final Oral Examination, the three committee members formally designated by the Graduate School as "readers" must review the draft dissertation and sign a form indicating that it is "ready for defense." This form must be returned to the Graduate School before clearance to hold the Final Oral Examination is granted.

Students are responsible for being aware of the various deadlines associated with this final process, including the Graduate School's policies about dissertation credits and about the time between advancing to doctoral candidacy and taking the Final Oral Examination.

The Final Oral Examination in Family Social Science begins with a formal presentation of the dissertation in a public forum to which all faculty, staff, and graduate students in the department are invited. Following the formal presentation, the candidate meets with the examining committee that has been appointed by the Graduate School. A member of the dissertation committee other than the student's adviser is appointed by the Graduate School to "chair" the Final Oral Examination, and informs the student of the outcome immediately after the examination session.

Dissertation Format Options

The Graduate Faculty has adopted a policy (4/93) that allows students two options for the dissertation format. In addition to the traditional volume-length dissertation, students may negotiate with their committee for a journal article format. Suggested procedural details follow. However, students, advisers, and committees are free to work out the specific details for each dissertation, within the overall spirit and the general guidelines of this policy.

- The dissertation proposal, presented in conjunction with the Preliminary Oral Examination, consists of an introduction, literature review, conceptual framework, and detailed methodology for the proposed study.
- After discussing the dissertation format with the adviser, the student will write a letter specifying the desired format for the dissertation (traditional or journal article format). This letter will be sent to the student's official Preliminary Oral Committee along with the dissertation proposal. The committee will approve or modify the format request at the Preliminary Oral Examination meeting. If the student is proposing a journal article format, then s/he should also propose an appropriate journal whose format (length/style) will be used for the dissertation.
- If the journal length format is selected, then the final dissertation submitted to the committee and eventually to the Graduate School will consist of:
 - a revised dissertation proposal which includes any changes required by the committee after the Preliminary Oral Examination along with a revision of the methodology section to describe the procedures actually used, and
 - a journal length manuscript presenting the full study.
 - committee members may ask to examine tables and other information for which there is not space in the journal article, and the student may be asked to include appendices that archive methodological details, data analyses, data, and other information that would flesh out the research for a reader who wants more than an article would provide. An example might be including the coding manual in an appendix. Ideally, recommendations about appendices should be made at the Preliminary Oral Examination so that the student can prepare them in advance of the Final Oral Examination; however, the committee may also request supplemental appendices be added after the Final Oral Examination.

FSoS Requirements for Participating in the Commencement Ceremony

The Graduate Faculty believes that students should not participate in the commencement ceremony until they have successfully defended their dissertation. Students who have not yet passed the final oral must file a special request with the Graduate School to participate in commencement. This approval is usually filed early in the semester of graduation (e.g., October 1 for fall commencement, March 1 for spring). The student's adviser and Director of Graduate Studies must sign this form. In order to obtain departmental approval, the following conditions must be met:

Final Oral Examination must be scheduled.

Dissertation must have been distributed to committee members.

Adviser must attest that the student's likelihood of successfully completing the Final Oral Examination before commencement is very high.

If these events do not occur before commencement, the student may not participate in the ceremony.