

DISSERTATION PROSPECTUS
Guidelines for Political Science Graduate Students
(January 2016)

Students should begin meeting with prospective dissertation committee members no later than one month after passing their Candidacy Examination to explore potential dissertation topics. **Students are strongly encouraged to form a dissertation committee quickly, and to consult frequently** with their committee members about a proposed research topic and preparation of their dissertation prospectus. Students should be pro-active in soliciting advice from faculty on an ongoing basis.

Dissertation Committee: When students have settled on a dissertation topic and on the composition of their Dissertation Committee, this information should be recorded on the appropriate form (*Dissertation Committee and Proposed Subject for PhD* form) and placed on file with the Graduate Studies Coordinator. The Dissertation Committee consists of at least three faculty members whose professional skills and interests can contribute to the student's intended dissertation topic. The Dissertation Committee is composed of the advisor who must be a category P Graduate Faculty member and at least two other Graduate Faculty members who must be either category M or P (one of whom must be a member of the Political Science faculty). Under exceptional and compelling circumstances, a category M faculty member may request to the Chair of the Department that he/she be designated a category P status in order to serve as Chair of a Dissertation Committee. Approval of such a request is at the discretion of both the Chair of the Department and the proposed category M faculty member. Additional Graduate Faculty also may serve on the Dissertation Committee. The advisor serves as Chair of the Dissertation Committee. Selection of an appropriate committee should be discussed by the student and his or her advisor and is subject to the rules of the Graduate Studies Committee.

With the approval of the Graduate School, faculty from other universities or persons with special academic or technical expertise may be appointed to the Dissertation Committee. External members are in addition to the required three, current Ohio State Graduate Faculty members.

Time Frame: By March 15 of the third year, the student is expected to have prepared, in ongoing consultation with his or her Dissertation Committee, a draft dissertation prospectus to be presented and discussed in a meeting with all Dissertation Committee Members present. When the Committee concludes that the prospectus is satisfactory, the *Dissertation Colloquium Report* form should be placed on file with the Graduate Studies Coordinator.

The purpose of the prospectus is (1) to establish the program of research that the candidate proposes to follow in the preparation of the dissertation, (2) to indicate the significance of the planned dissertation research and its relationship to the existing body of knowledge in political science and related areas of inquiry and (3) to provide the information on points (1) and (2) above in a clear and sufficiently detailed written form so that the candidate's dissertation committee can bring their judgment to bear in advising the student about the appropriateness and adequacy of his/her anticipated doctoral research program.

The specific format of the prospectus, as well as its contents and length, should be worked out with the committee, and in particular the committee Chair. The prospectus is not a final

product but a working document that may be significantly altered in light of ongoing discussions with the dissertation committee members and the actual initiation of the research itself. The dissertation colloquium should be viewed as an opportunity for intellectual exchange and not as a formal “hurdle” in the sense that a student either passes or fails.

Issues that are often addressed in a dissertation prospectus include:

- (1) The purpose or objective of the planned dissertation.** What is the puzzle or problem or hypothesis(es) that the research addresses? How will the existing knowledge base be different as a result of the dissertation? What are the limits or boundaries of the proposed dissertation? (Make clear that the proposal is feasible and focused.)
- (2) Significance of the proposed research:** What important theoretical and/or empirical issue does the research address? In other words, why does it matter that this research be undertaken?
- (3) The present state of knowledge related to the topic.** What do we already know (or think we know) in the area of proposed research? Is there consensus or disagreement? The bibliographical review included in the prospectus **should not** be an extensive literature review that lists references in a general domain but rather one that discusses the specific contribution or shortcomings contained in particular items **relevant** to the proposed research.
- (4) The research strategy to be employed.** How will the problem be investigated? Where appropriate, what analytical methods, types of evidence, data collection strategies, and sources will be employed? Show how key concepts will be defined and, if appropriate, measured. Discuss what type(s) of evidence will support your hypotheses and what evidence could demonstrate that they are incorrect?
- (5) Enumeration of the specific and as yet unresolved problems the candidate perceives.** The colloquium is a time for gaining help from the dissertation committee as a whole. It may be the first time that the student meets with the committee as a whole. Focus their attention on problems that need further consideration.
- (6) Outline of the chapters.**

After discussion about the draft prospectus, the Committee may conclude that the draft prospectus represents a satisfactory basis upon which research on the dissertation should proceed. If this is the case, then this meeting constitutes the prospectus colloquium and the dissertation colloquium report should be checked accordingly and signed by all committee members. The forms must then be turned in at the Department level to the Graduate Program Coordinator.

However, based upon discussion of the draft prospectus, it is quite appropriate for the student and/or the committee to decide that substantial revision of the prospectus is required. Should this be the case, on the basis of the discussion of the draft prospectus and suggestions for revisions made during this meeting, a revised dissertation prospectus should be presented at a colloquium with all Dissertation Committee Members by the end of Spring semester of the third

year. Failure to secure approval of the prospectus in a timely fashion may be regarded as unsatisfactory progress toward degree and will be taken into consideration when funding decisions are made by the Financial Aid Committee. Because the funding of advanced students is typically through teaching, this means that failure to secure prospectus approval may result in at least a temporary denial of Departmental funding.

DISSERTATION COLLOQUIUM REPORT-POLITICAL SCIENCE

This form certifies that the candidate whose name appears below presented a dissertation prospectus to the designated committee and then an agreement was reached as to what next steps should be taken in preparing the doctoral dissertation. The candidate should complete the top part of the form before the colloquium. Return this form to the graduate studies coordinator.

Name: _____

Tentative Dissertation Title: _____

Date of Colloquium: _____

Dissertation Field: _____

Year PhD Expected: _____

Based on the dissertation prospectus and colloquium of this student, the faculty committee reading this dissertation (names appear below) recommend the following:

- The dissertation plan as presented or with limited revisions (to be noted in the record of the session or a letter to the candidate) provides an adequate basis for proceeding with the dissertation research.

- Substantial revision or elaboration of the prospectus is advised before beginning to execute the planned research. (Note: If this item is checked, please indicate on the back of this form how the student is to gain the approval of the committee after modifications have been made. For example, schedule another colloquium, individual conferences with committee, closed session with committee, etc. A new revision of this form should be completed after revisions have been reviewed by the committee.)

- Other (Please specify. Use back if needed)

AGREED:

Chair

Member

Member

Member

DISSERTATION COMMITTEE and PROPOSED SUBJECT for PhD in POLITICAL SCIENCE

Name: _____ Date: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Field in Political Science: _____

Proposed Dissertation Title: _____

Brief Description of Proposed Dissertation:

I have discussed the dissertation plans of the candidate whose name appears above and I am willing to serve on his/her dissertation committee.

Chair

Member

Member

Member

The faculty of the field of political science in which this candidate is located has reviewed the dissertation committee and recommends its approval.

Field Coordinator's Signature

(Note: Return this form to the Graduate Program Coordinator.)

(See Reverse for Instructions)

Instructions:

Upon successful completion of the qualifying examinations for admission as a candidate in political science for the Ph.D., the graduate student needs to petition the Department for a faculty dissertation reading committee. The dissertation committee is constituted separately from the members of the faculty who evaluated the student's general qualifying examination. Neither the chairperson nor the other members of the dissertation committee need be drawn from those individuals who served on the general qualifying examination.

The student should recommend three members of the Graduate School Faculty (list available from Dissertation Coordinator) with whom he/she believes a working relationship can be established and whose professional skills and interests can contribute to his/her intended dissertation topic. The committee should be established as soon as a provisional dissertation topic has been selected.

The back of this statement constitutes the form to be used in gaining the agreement of faculty members to serve. Before obtaining the signatures of three faculty members, you should type in the information at the top of the page including a brief description of the topic of your proposed dissertation. After obtaining the signature of the head of your field, the completed form should be given to the dissertation coordinator.