

UNM
College of Education

**Dissertation Guide for
Doctoral Students**

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Dissertation Guide for Doctoral Students

The University of New Mexico

College of Education

Preface

This guide was created to help you gain a general understanding of the dissertation process. The dissertation stage of doctoral studies begins after completion of core courses and successful completion of the Comprehensive Examination, and after a formal Application for Candidacy has been submitted. This Manual does not cover all procedures related to doctoral studies. Rather it provides a handy reference for the process of completing the dissertation. This guide was adapted from the *Dissertation Manual: A Guide for Faculty Mentoring Students* developed by the UNM College of Education Graduate Committee. Our aspiration is to provide a document that serves as a brief review of some philosophies, practices, and helpful advice as you progress through the dissertation process and completion of your degree. The guide contains multiple parts:

Part I: Recommended Practices

The first part of this guide focuses on recommended practices. In a College as diverse as ours, there are numerous variations from department to department on how doctoral research is conducted and in how a dissertation is prepared. Keep in mind that **the chapters in this guidebook are not policy statements**. They are intended only to provide you with suggestions on how to develop and complete a dissertation.

Part II: Roles in the Dissertation Process

This section describes the roles of the student, dissertation chairperson and dissertation committee members in the dissertation process.

Part III: The Dissertation Proposal

This section provides a description of how a proposal is created and the proposal meeting.

Part IV: The Dissertation (after proposal)

This section describes the process between the proposal meeting and final defense of the dissertation.

Part V: Policies and Procedures

This is a brief summary of some important policies and procedures that govern how dissertation research is conducted as determined by the UNM Senate Graduate Committee and administered by the Office of Graduate Studies (OGS). Also, in the second section is information on how faculty and students can access the exact details of these regulations and policies online.

Part VI: An itinerary of the order and scheduling of dissertation events

Part VII: Dissertation Checklist

Acknowledgements:

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Part I: Recommended Practices

Introduction

A doctoral degree is different from a Master's degree in many ways. One significant difference is the expectation that as you progress through your doctoral program, you are joining the scholarly community of our academic society. More than just becoming knowledgeable by reading and taking classes, a doctoral student is one who is inquisitive and curious about his/her field of study. The dissertation is an opportunity for you to actively contribute to the scholarship in your chosen field through research that demonstrates proficiency necessary to be a member of this community.

The Dissertation

The dissertation is a curricular requirement that demonstrates your ability to plan and carry out original research along a line of inquiry, or produce creative works that add to knowledge in a chosen area of inquiry. It involves critical analysis and interpretation of prior research in the field, wisdom and innovation in designing research projects, application of appropriate methodology to test hypotheses, professional insight in data analysis, scholarly interpretation of results, and contribution to scholarship through written and oral dissemination of findings.

The dissertation is not intended to be your life's culminating work, but rather the beginnings of a life of scholarship. As such, it is an exercise in practicing the various steps involved in scholarship of the highest order, with your chairperson as your primary mentor. You are expected to work closely with your chair. He or she can provide instruction in every aspect of this scholarly enterprise, from posing researchable questions and addressing Institutional Review Board (IRB) procedures to guidance on data analysis. The dissertation chairperson does not actually assist in the collection of data or conduct the data analysis, but can prompt you to re-examine or reconsider particular aspects of your work and research findings.

While the chairperson is active in mentoring and guiding you, all aspects of the dissertation are your responsibility. For example, you must select a topic based on your experience and interest in the field. Deadlines and communication with various parties are also your responsibility. (See specifically Part VI: An Itinerary of the order and scheduling of dissertation events and other sections of this manual for examples of student responsibilities.)

Because the dissertation is written for a scholarly community, it can seem as though it is written in a 'different language' at times because the academy often employs specialized jargon to summarize complex concepts. Indeed, academic writing can be more difficult and precise than writing simple prose, although the goal should be to write so that any educated person can understand your arguments. It is

helpful to be prepared to spend more time than expected writing and editing. Some programs and committees require a more technical style, while others request a more reflective, personal style. It may help to look at dissertations of recent graduates in your department.

The dissertation is not intended to be a long-term written and oral examination. Rather, you should incorporate prior coursework and experience as part of this culminating endeavor. Because the dissertation is different from a comprehensive exam, your interaction with your Dissertation Committee may entail more or less interaction than what you experienced with your Committee on Studies (for comprehensive exam), depending upon department expectations and process for the comprehensive exam. A major function of your Dissertation Committee may be to help you identify ways to strengthen your main points, and to clarify and articulate your argument. It is an expectation of the academy that entrants into the scholarly community demonstrate they have mastered the basic theory, knowledge, and methods of their field.

Chapters of the Dissertation

There are typically four to six chapters to a dissertation in the College of Education. The number of chapters varies across departments and programs. Some departments and programs prefer dissertations with four chapters, some with five, and some with six. A typical five chapter dissertation includes:

- I. Introduction
- II. Literature Review
- III. Methods
- IV. Findings
- V. Conclusion and Implications

Normally, the first three chapters are written and presented as your **Proposal**. The proposal is written under the guidance of your Dissertation Chair and Dissertation Committee. The remaining chapters are completed after thorough analysis of the data. All chapters are presented at your **Final Defense**.

Chapters Written for the Proposal

The Introduction, Chapter One, sets the context for your study. You are asked to provide background information on your topic and to develop the problem statement and significance of your study. This is the chapter where you first discuss assumptions and limitations that were considered in designing the project and your theoretical framework. It is important to define terminology in the first chapter so that all readers have the same vocabulary you use throughout the dissertation.

The Literature Review, Chapter Two, describes the research that exists on your topic and details the manner in which you conducted your search. This is where you demonstrate your knowledge of the topic and how your topic will build upon and contribute to existing literature or educational practice. Here you identify patterns or gaps in the research on your topic, or questions that have not yet been addressed in your field. Rather than being simply a summary of existing research on your topic, the literature review is often presented as an argument. For more example, more information on writing literature reviews can be found in the work of Fink (1998), or Hart (1998).

Chapter Three is typically the chapter in which you describe the Method you plan to use in carrying out your research. Here you will describe your participants in detail while ensuring the utmost confidentiality, if they have already been selected. Or you will describe the method you will use to select participants and ensure confidentiality. You will describe the type of project you will carry out and the details of your setting. Any materials you use are described in this chapter, including how these materials were developed. Description of the procedures you plan to use will be specific enough that someone else reading your methodology section could carry

out this project without consulting you. As a proposal for what you are requesting to carry out, the method chapter is written in future tense.

You will present your proposal chapters at your Proposal Hearing to your Dissertation Committee, a group of program and non-program faculty assembled to supervise your work. It is understood that each member has the opportunity to contribute to the development of your ideas. They also are given the final draft of your proposal at least three weeks (during a regular semester in which classes are in session) before the Proposal Hearing. Your committee members have looked at your work and discussed it with you individually. The committee members and chair have also agreed to the meeting prior to it being scheduled (i.e. they feel the proposal is ready for a proposal meeting). The proposal hearing is sometimes the first time your committee will come together as a group to discuss your proposal. Sometimes, discussion by the committee with you on your project leads to unanticipated questions. These might be questions that do not surface until your presentation, or in response to a comment by a committee member at your proposal hearing. This type of deliberation is important to the development of your final proposal. Discussion and revisions are part of the work of a scholarly community.

Near the end of the proposal meeting, the committee will decide whether they approve the proposal. They also will discuss any changes in the proposal that will be required prior to the beginning of the study.

Also required prior to beginning data collection is approval of your study by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the University of New Mexico. Detailed instructions and templates are provided online at <http://hsc.unm.edu/som/research/HRRC/maincampusirbhome.shtml>.

Although this will be your study, it will be important to work with your dissertation chair on completing IRB forms and proposals, since UNM requires that studies be sponsored by a full-time tenured or tenure-track UNM faculty member. Allow at least four weeks from the time of submission to approval by the IRB (longer if revisions are required). Please note: successful completion of the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) online test is required prior to submission for your IRB proposal. It is recommended that you take this test even before the initial design of your study, as it contains important information that may pertain to aspects of your study design and procedures. The CITI website can be found at <https://www.citiprogram.org/default.asp?language=english>.

Chapters Written for the Final Defense

Conducting research is a dynamic process; therefore, it is not uncommon for there to be changes in the process of carrying out your research. However, any changes in conducting the research that come up after the Proposal Hearing must be approved by the chair and committee members, and must also meet approval of the Institutional Review Board (IRB). When you have completed your project, your Method chapter is rewritten in past tense and accurately and confidentially describes all aspects of selection of and participation of subjects/participants and the setting. All information on materials and procedures are provided exactly as they were used and carried out.

Chapter Four details a discussion of the results or findings and their significance. This is where you provide analysis of the resulting data or findings, given the data analysis procedures you proposed in your Proposal Hearing. Chapter Five provides the reader with your conclusions and implications of your work for your field of study.

The dissertation is a large-scale report on your scholarly endeavor. It is important that you work with your Dissertation Chair to assure that writing of the last chapters is consistent with findings and with the scholarly writing style in your field. Other committee members often contribute to this process before the Final Defense. After the results have been analyzed and all chapters of the dissertation are written to the satisfaction of the Dissertation Chair, copies of the 'next to final draft' (often referred to as the Penultimate Draft) are distributed to all committee members. This is done at least three weeks (during a regular semester in which classes are scheduled) before the date scheduled for the Final Defense.

Remember that one semester before graduation, you are responsible for submitting the 'Intent to Graduate' form to your department before the department then sends the form to OGS.

Part II: Roles in the Dissertation Process

The Role of the Student

The dissertation, in addition to being a process that creates a significant contribution to the field of study, is a process of becoming a peer scholar. It is often difficult for students to navigate this process. As you progress through the dissertation, you will need to balance the recommendations and expectations of all committee members. Working closely with your chair is key to this process as is listening closely to the suggestions/requirements of all committee members. Often the comments of the committee members will differ from one another. You will need to discuss the different comments with the chair and problem-solve a way to meet differing expectations, or work with the committee to find a compromise. The chairperson typically provides essential advice and sometimes advocacy during this process. The proposal hearing is the time when final decisions regarding the proposed study are made.

Your dissertation chair has a role that is recognized by committee members and by faculty of the program. The chair is responsible for monitoring the quality of your dissertation and your scholarly development. This can sometimes create a dilemma for faculty mentors and students. The dissertation and work of the graduate student requires faculty input and direction, but when faculty input becomes excessive, the project is no longer a student's work. Your dissertation chair will likely not give you all the answers, rather he or she will point you in directions, ask you clarifying questions, and give you points to consider. It is the role of the chair to ensure that the dissertation is the work of the student rather than the student carrying out a research idea that is the chair's hypothesis and research design.

The dissertation demonstrates your abilities and competencies as well as integration of theory and research skills acquired in classes with real-life phenomena. The dissertation represents an important process and experience that is as important a part of your education as is completing coursework. Like coursework, the dissertation is assessed with the possibility of a failing grade. You are expected to make consistent progress each semester on the dissertation. Because the dissertation is a part of doctoral education, program and department faculty have developed policies and procedures that clearly delineate the conditions for satisfactory progress on a dissertation. It is important you have a clear understanding of what is considered satisfactory progress. Your chair will be able to clarify this and locate any program or department policies. Chairs also have expectations, and it is critical that you discuss these with your chairperson.

Faculties sometimes develop their own program or department assessment forms to support the dissertation defense assessment forms from the Office of Graduate Studies. (See Manuscripts: Report on Thesis/Dissertation at: <http://www.unm.edu/grad/forms/forms.html> for example.) Such a form might contain the following questions:

- ❑ How involved was the student in the development of the research question?
- ❑ Was the student trained and competent in all aspects of data collection?
- ❑ Was the student self-sufficient in data collection?
- ❑ Did the student correctly adhere to all aspects of human subjects' research requirements?
- ❑ Was the student competent in organizing and managing data?
- ❑ Was the student competent in processing data?
- ❑ Was the student competent in statistical procedures?
- ❑ Did the student correctly interpret the data?
- ❑ To what extent does the finished work contribute to the discipline?

It is important for you to find out what forms are used at the defense for evaluation, including those forms from the Office of Graduate Studies (OGS). The responses to the questions on the forms provide feedback after the defense.

The Dissertation Committee

Although the Dissertation Chair carries the primary responsibility for guiding a doctoral student's dissertation, the Dissertation Committee shares in the responsibility of providing assistance as needed in the development, conduct, and writing of the proposal and final dissertation. The University of New Mexico requires at least four committee members, including the dissertation chair, all approved by the Dean of Graduate Studies (see links below). One of the four members must be from outside your program. The selection of each committee member is critical to the success of the doctoral student, not only in the dissertation process, but also after graduation. All members of the committee will need to be able to communicate freely and openly with each other. Thus, it is important that once you have identified the Dissertation Chair, she or he also be involved in the selection of the other committee members. Often one member, which may be a faculty member outside your program, will be identified with specific expertise in research methods or data analysis. Sometimes a faculty member from outside the university is also selected, especially if your topic is one in which they can further mentor your professional opportunities upon graduation. If this is the case, your committee may consist of at least five members.

Who Can Chair a Dissertation?

The short answer to this question is any regular (tenured or tenure-track) faculty member who has been approved for graduate instruction by the COE Graduate Committee, in consultation with the COE Dean, and is approved for dissertation committee service by the UNM Dean of the Office of Graduate Studies.

However, some programs and departments within the College of Education have more stringent guidelines for who qualifies to chair a dissertation. For example, some programs specify that a chairperson must have the requisite understanding of the dissertation process to guide students through the dissertation. This guideline safeguards doctoral students and newer faculty who are learning the rules and regulations governing dissertations at UNM. The major factor in selecting a dissertation chair should be the content expertise of the prospective chair, and the compatibility between faculty member and doctoral student. Most programs in the College of Education require that the dissertation chair be a faculty member in the student's program. Some programs in the College of Education permit faculty outside the student's program to co-chair dissertations with a faculty member from within the program.

A co-chair may be appropriate in situations in which a committee member is asked to provide time and effort beyond the expectations of a regular committee member. This kind of situation occurs sometimes with faculty members who have expertise in a particular method or subject matter expertise and are asked to volunteer considerable time and talent to supervising the doctoral student. A co-chair

may also be considered as an option when the dissertation chair moves to another department or institution. If the dissertation chair has already been approved and either changed programs, changed departments within the college, taken a position outside of the college, or moved to another university, another faculty member is selected from the student's program to serve as chair. Because doctoral students often seek doctorates from faculty whose work they have followed, and because they sometimes begin a doctoral program to work with specific faculty, such a change of advisor may leave them at a loss for selecting academic mentors. In such cases, the faculty and program may select a co-chair to work with the original chair. Any time there is the possibility that the student will want to work with co-chairs, the option and request must be presented to the program coordinator and department chairs for approval.

The Dissertation Chair: Making the Commitment

Completing a dissertation is a rite of passage for doctoral students. The dissertation process involves developmental and socialization functions in which faculty model scholarly collaboration and ultimately promote the "students" to the rank of 'academic peer'. Chairing a dissertation requires considerable time, effort, and commitment on a faculty member's part and often leads to a lifelong relationship. Dissertation chairpersons may publish with their dissertation students and often are instrumental in helping them develop their careers by writing references and supporting them in their job applications. Some programs have a large number of doctoral students and a small number of faculty. Because of the significant time commitment, faculty sometimes limit the number of student dissertations they chair.

Deciding to chair a student's dissertation is based in part on the degree of compatibility between the student and faculty mentor, given the demands and intensity of the student-mentor relationship. Some students and faculty find it useful to document agreements related to goals, expectations, and feedback.

The Role of Committee Members

Agreeing to serve on a dissertation committee involves a variety of responsibilities to the doctoral student, the chair, and the field. Primarily, dissertation committee members provide consultation to the chair and to you. Sometimes you might feel the need to turn to committee members for assistance on issues that in reality should be worked out with the chair. Committee members generally will provide feedback as appropriate but also may refer you to your chairperson for further discussion. It is important to avoid expecting committee members to provide significant guidance and instruction or to do the work of the chairperson. If, for whatever reason, you are reluctant to go directly to your dissertation committee chair and find yourself consistently seeking assistance from committee members, you should explore the situation with your department chair.

Dissertation Committee members in the College of Education have different expectations about reviewing and editing proposals and final dissertations. Some committee members want to be involved in all phases of editing the document. Others prefer to see only the final draft after the chairperson has made editorial corrections. It is very important to clarify these expectations with the chairperson and each committee member prior to beginning work on the dissertation.

Dissertation committee members ordinarily are provided a minimum of three weeks (during which classes are in session) to review drafts, proposals and final dissertations. This time is needed for the committee to review the draft in detail prior to the hearing or defense date. If the document is significantly flawed, the concerns are usually communicated to the chairperson and to you prior to a proposal hearing or final dissertation defense. This is to help you prepare for the concerns that will be raised during the meeting. However, not all concerns or questions will be provided to you prior to the meeting. There will be items that are only brought up during the meeting and items that result from the discussion during the meetings.

In some cases, it may be necessary to postpone the proposal hearing or dissertation defense if there are major problems. Dissertation committee members provide “quality control” over the dissertation process and research. This is an important responsibility of the committee. They may determine that the document is not ready to move forward. It is important to recognize the value of diverse opinions in the dissertation process; intellectual stimulation is dependent upon it. Constructive criticism and feedback are part of the process. Moreover, committee members have both the right and responsibility to raise objections and seek changes to a dissertation proposal or a completed dissertation that does not meet expectations of the field.

Infrequently, what appear to be irreconcilable differences develop among the dissertation committee members, and the possibility of a committee member resigning from a committee may be raised. Resignation or dismissal of a committee member is an exceedingly rare and undesirable event and some assert that it should

never happen. In all work with the committee, it is important to employ tact and respect. The chairperson works to prevent misunderstandings by avoiding assumptions and communicating expectations explicitly to fellow committee members. Committee members do have the right to resign from a committee for any number of reasons, including time and commitment limitations, irreconcilable philosophical differences, or undesirable friction with other committee members. The decision to ask a committee member to step down, however, is the student's. Should this occur, the chairperson should make sure the dismissed committee member is informed of his or her dismissal and given an explanation for the dismissal. Should a student opt to dismiss a committee member, it may be advisable to include an explanation of this dismissal in the student's file. In the event of changes in committee members, OGS requires a revised Approval of Dissertation committee form and a memo of explanation if the student is within three months of defending the dissertation. It is a good idea for students to seek committee members with whom they have had some experience. Inviting people unknown by the student or the chair injects a degree of uncertainty into the process, which may unduly complicate the committee's work.

See Faculty Approvals at

<http://www.unm.edu/grad/catalog/catalog13a.html>

Your dissertation chairperson will guide and support you throughout the proposal and dissertation. One of the important first steps is meeting with your dissertation chairperson to discuss his/her and your responsibilities related to the dissertation process. In particular, you are responsible for attending to the paperwork related to your dissertation and graduation. Chairs often require students to become familiar with the paperwork and scheduling deadlines in their department, in the College of Education, and in the Office of Graduate Studies.

See <http://www.unm.edu/grad/forms/forms.html>. We strongly advise you to keep track of the various deadlines that impact your progression.

Part III: The Dissertation Proposal

You probably already have excellent ideas for research. It is helpful to focus on a topic that is within the scope of a dissertation. Your chair will help you focus on a topic and on a study that is within realistic time limits and resource constraints. By raising appropriate questions, your chairperson will help you think about the parameters of a do-able dissertation. A valuable resource for seeing what other doctoral students have accomplished and exploring types of recent dissertations at other universities is the Dissertation Abstracts.

It is important to select an idea you have a passion for, to articulate researchable questions, and to formulate an appropriate research method. Dissertation chairs are often invaluable in assisting students in these areas, and in guiding the development of dissertation research that will ultimately enhance prospects for advancement in the field. Moreover, the chairperson has the responsibility for making sure your proposed research method is consistent with the type of research questions asked and that you have the necessary competencies to conduct the proposed study.

Early in the proposal stage, discuss with your chair the process of giving and receiving feedback. Not only should there be discussion about how feedback will be given (e.g., face-to-face, via email, etc.), but also about how often and at what points in the process. It is critical that you understand that feedback is given to improve the dissertation and not to stall the process. Remember that the chair's job is to provide constructive criticism (sometimes in writing) giving clear explanations on how the dissertation can be revised and improved. Your chairperson will expect you to address the feedback she or he provides and to request clarification whenever necessary.

While programs have different requirements for the dissertation proposal format, several programs within the College require the completion of dissertation chapters one, two, and three, and the completion of a draft of the proposal you will send to the Institutional Review Board (this is required at UNM for approval of use of proposed method with participants/Human Subjects – see <http://hsc.unm.edu/som/research/HRRC/maincampusirbhome.shtml>), prior to the dissertation proposal hearing. Even though the requirements of individual programs may differ, it is important that the dissertation proposal be well developed, particularly the method chapter, as it is considered a contract between you and your dissertation committee. When the proposal is not fully developed and you are not well prepared for the proposal meeting, you can experience significant problems both at the proposal and dissertation defense. For example committee members may feel that the study has not been adequately justified or carried out.

Once you have written your proposal and your committee approves of the contents, organization and format, you will schedule a proposal hearing. COE policy

is that the announcement of your proposal hearing must go out two weeks before the actual date of the hearing. However, your particular department may require that you submit paperwork for the announcement even earlier. Additionally, it is important to remember that one semester before completion of the dissertation and graduation, you must submit the 'Intent to Graduate' form to your department so that the Department Administrator can submit the form to the Office of Graduate Studies.

Finally, it is very important at the onset of a dissertation to establish ownership and expectations about eventual publication. You are encouraged to publish the dissertation research because dissemination of research is part of the scholarly endeavor. There are a variety of opinions about publication credit and dissertations among the faculty in the College and nationwide. In some departments, students are sole authors on publications stemming from their dissertations. In other departments, they are first authors on such publications. **Authorship and data ownership credit is important to discuss prior to the beginning of the dissertation process.** Professional ethics and standards are provided by some professional organizations (e.g., the American Psychological Association: <http://www.apa.org/ethics/code1992.html>) and may be covered by the University's "intellectual property" regulations. (See UNM Intellectual Property Policy in the Faculty Handbook: <http://www.unm.edu/%7ehandbook/E70.html>.)

Preparing for the Proposal Hearing

One major responsibility of your dissertation chair is to determine when the proposal is ready to be presented to the full dissertation committee. A proposal hearing or defense is scheduled only after the chair approves the dissertation proposal (or the dissertation, in the case of the defense). It's important to keep in mind that a dissertation reflects on the chairperson as well as the student. The chairperson exercises the authority of determining when a proposal or defense is ready to go to the full committee.

Some dissertation chairs encourage students to consult with committee members early on so that each committee member is given an opportunity to have input into the oversight of the project. On the other hand, many dissertation committee members enjoy providing verbal input and involvement in the development of the dissertation idea but prefer not to edit or review unedited drafts of proposals and defense manuscripts. Moreover, many faculty members on dissertation committees prefer to participate in meetings only after the student and dissertation chair have carefully articulated appropriate theory, research design, and analytic techniques. Fostering communication between committee members and developing a general consensus of committee members' opinions prior to scheduling a proposal hearing or defense helps students and the chairperson anticipate issues that may be raised during the meeting. The dissertation chairperson initiates this communication.

As stated earlier (on p. 9), committee members generally expect to receive a penultimate draft of the proposal and dissertation **at least** three weeks (during which classes are in session) prior to the scheduled date of the proposal hearing or dissertation defense. This timeline varies by department and program. It is the student's responsibility to find out from their chair the timeline in their program.

Sometimes a student and his or her chairperson decide they need to convene a pre-proposal meeting to reconcile differing opinions or to get the input or support of the dissertation committee members on a particularly difficult issue. When this is done, the chair should explicitly state, and have the concurrence of the other dissertation committee faculty, that the purpose of the meeting is to move a step closer to a proposal hearing rather than determine the merits of the proposal. Such a meeting is arranged informally and requires no official paperwork or documentation.

At the Proposal Hearing

The dissertation chairperson facilitates the process by setting the agenda and keeping the meeting on schedule. For example, the chairperson typically starts the meeting by noting the time allotted for the meeting, usually 2 hours and the various parts of the meeting: student presentation, questions & discussion, deliberations. These discussions at the proposal hearing may entail some changes to your first three chapters. The ideas that surface are intended to contribute to the quality of your proposal. The changes may range from minute details in editing, to significant changes in the materials or procedures that are agreed upon. One unique feature of a proposal hearing is that the agreed upon proposal is often comparable to a contract between student and committee. Because of this, the proposal hearing is often more critical than the dissertation defense in terms of the dissertation chairperson asking committee members to clarify their suggestions and changes to the research method.

The doctoral student often is given responsibility for the content of the meeting and is sometimes granted the opportunity to conduct the meeting. Either way, the chairperson usually takes notes on what suggestions and changes the committee seeks. (Some chairpersons prefer you tape record the proceedings.) It's important to let the committee do its job of educating you and supervising your research. Chairpersons may intercede when the project is losing focus or if suggestions are raised that would make the project too expansive or overly simplified. The chair concludes the meeting by clarifying expectations and the process for final approval of the dissertation proposal. Issues such as details about the quality of the study as reflected in research design (e.g., sample size), whether committee members expect to review drafts, the timetable for the study, who will monitor changes to the study, and how, should be discussed and agreed upon before the meeting concludes. In some cases a follow-up meeting is necessary. In other instances, the chairperson is authorized by the committee to review and approve revisions. The proposal is not accepted until committee members affix their signatures to a form that reports the results of the proposal hearing. It is the committee chair's responsibility to provide this form, acquire the signatures, and return the completed form to the Department Administrator.

When the dissertation proposal is approved it should be regarded as a contract between the student and the dissertation committee. Both have the responsibility of meeting the terms of this contract. Approval of the dissertation proposal does not automatically infer that the dissertation defense will also be approved. The student still must work diligently through to the end of the dissertation process to earn her/his doctorate.

Part IV: The Dissertation (after proposal)

The chair provides guidance and feedback as the student engages in data collection, analysis, interpretation, and writing of the report. The chairperson encourages and supports and provides or points out resources. The developmental goal of a dissertation is to foster your growth as an autonomous scholar. Effective and clear communication between the chairperson and student is critical during this stage.

It is important that the student maintain regular contact with the chairperson and keep the chairperson and committee members informed about the progress of the dissertation. While the goal of the dissertation process is to foster your growth as a scholar, students are encouraged to seek input from committee members after the chairperson has read and approved chapters. Because the chairperson must assign a grade of "PR" for progress at the end of each term until the dissertation is completed, it is recommended that they have the student document in writing the progress made at the end of each term. Students must inform the chairperson and committee members of any major changes, such as being gone for a term.

During data analysis, it is often helpful for both the student and chairperson to review the data together. In this way, the chairperson can advise the student on the data analysis especially where there may be problems. Students may need help in thinking about the data: a meeting with the chair helps students articulate what they believe the data are representing and helps the chairperson become familiar with the findings. As a general rule, students should do research and analyses that they understand and can do themselves.

Students sometimes struggle with organizational details such as setting up a schedule and organizing resources. The chairperson can offer advice on how to develop and maintain an organizational system for the dissertation. She or he can provide suggestions for a method of indexing for a literature review such as setting up a filing system using index cards and color coding them or using a computer program for indexing, setting up data files and naming variables, and developing regular writing habits. It is critical that students write regularly and not procrastinate.

Students have a wide variety of writing skills and talents. Many students struggle with writing, and editing manuscripts for some students can be an onerous task. It is not the chairperson's role to do extensive rewriting of students' work. The student should discuss his/her writing skills and abilities openly with the chair and where writing skills are problematic, the chair may make recommendations, such as that students take advantage of the College of Education Graduate Student Writing Studio for writing support. The Writing Studio provides one-on-one assistance and workshops at no charge.

Last, it is important for students to set realistic time goals for the dissertation and to recognize faculty time limitations and schedules, such as summer schedules.

Many, if not most, faculty members are not available during the summer. Remember, committee members should be given at least three weeks during which classes are in session for reading and providing feedback.

The Final Defense

In the Final Defense, you present and defend your dissertation. Your committee will determine how much time you will have to present your work. Typically, you will be allowed between a half to one full hour for your presentation. Sometimes, however, your committee may ask you to give only a brief summary of the significance of your topic and existing research in order to spend more time describing your actual project and findings. Be sure to clarify this with your chair prior to the Final Defense. This meeting provides you with an opportunity to engage in discussion with your committee on the project which you have carried out and which you know best. Any faculty member or graduate student may attend your Proposal Hearing or Dissertation Defense. You are allowed to also invite family members, colleagues and personal friends. You will also want to communicate invitations with your committee; however, the dissertation defense is an open and public hearing.

After your presentation, your committee chair will invite committee members to comment and ask you questions about your dissertation. If time permits, members of the audience will be invited to ask questions. After the question and answer session, you and all guests will be asked to leave the room. At this time your committee will evaluate your dissertation and oral defense.

As stated earlier, the Dissertation Committee is composed of at least four faculty members. In making recommendations to the Dean of Graduate Studies, three of the four members must agree. One of the following recommendations will be made:

1. That the dissertation be approved without change;
2. That the dissertation be approved subject only to minor editorial corrections; or
3. That the dissertation be rewritten or revised before approval.
4. Failure

According to the 2008-2009 UNM Catalog:

To recognize exceptional performance, "Passed with Distinction" may be placed on the transcripts of students who pass ... the final examination for the dissertation. This status will be determined at the time of the examination through agreement of the examining committee members, with final approval given by the department chairperson, and results forwarded to the Office of Graduate Studies. (p.75)

Part V: Policies & Procedures

(please refer to the current UNM catalog and current OGS website <http://www.unm.edu/~grad/> for the most recent updates)

Abstract of the most relevant Policies Specified by the Office of Graduate Studies

1. Dissertation policies take effect with the student's **Advancement to Candidacy** by the Dean of Graduate Studies (Doctoral Student advances to Doctoral Candidate).
2. **Time Limit for Completion of Degree Requirements.** Doctoral candidates have five calendar years from the date on which they pass their comprehensive exam to complete all degree requirements. The final requirement is generally the acceptance of the student's dissertation manuscript by the Dean of Graduate Studies.
3. **Continuous Enrollment.** Once a student has enrolled for dissertation (699) hours, continuous enrollment is expected in subsequent terms (exclusive of summer terms unless graduating in summer) until the dissertation is accepted by the Dean of Graduate Studies.
4. **Dissertation Committee.** Each doctoral candidate must prepare a dissertation. The Dissertation Committee is charged with the supervision of a doctoral candidate's dissertation activities, including the review and approval of the student's research proposal. The committee may include faculty members who were on the student's Committee on Studies. The doctoral candidate initiates the process of selecting the dissertation committee by first arranging for a qualified faculty member to serve as the director of the dissertation (i.e., Committee Chair). The committee chair advises the doctoral candidate on selection of the remainder of the committee.
 - a. **Composition of the Dissertation Committee.** The committee will consist of at least four members approved for graduate instruction by the Dean of Graduate Studies. The form for approval can be found at: http://www.unm.edu/grad/eforms/approval_for_committee_service.pdf. The composition of the committee is detailed in the document found at the following website: <http://www.unm.edu/grad/eforms/committee.PDF>
 - b. **Appointment of the Dissertation Committee.** The student arranges for an appropriate faculty member to serve as committee chair. The committee must be approved by the graduate unit chair or graduate unit advisor on the student's Application for Doctoral Candidacy. The committee must be approved by the Dean of Graduate Studies as part of the approval of the Candidacy Application.

5. **General Requirements for a Doctoral Degree.** A student must complete all course work requirements; fulfill any additional department or graduate unit requirements (e.g., foreign language or skill requirement, practicum, etc.); maintain a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher; pass the doctoral comprehensive examination, apply for candidacy to the Office of Graduate Studies; pass the Final Examination for the Doctorate; have a dissertation approved by the members of the dissertation committee and by the Dean of Graduate Studies.
6. **Defense.** The doctoral final oral examination is the last formal step before the degree is awarded. The focus of the final examination is the dissertation and its relationship to the student's major field.

At least two weeks before the final examination is held, the major graduate unit must notify the Office of Graduate Studies of its scheduled date by submitting an Announcement of Examination form. The student is responsible for providing each member of the dissertation committee with a complete copy of the dissertation in ample time for review and at least three weeks prior to the examination.

The presentation and examination phases of the exam are open to the public; the deliberation phase is only open to the committee. At the conclusion of the oral examination, the dissertation committee members will confer and make one of the following recommendations, which must be agreed upon by the majority of them: that the dissertation be approved without change; that the dissertation be approved subject only to minor editorial corrections; that the dissertation be rewritten or revised before approval; or failure. In addition, the committee members determine whether to award distinction to approved dissertations.

Part VI: An Itinerary of the Order and Scheduling of Dissertation Events (Faculty and Student Responsibilities)

In order to take the comprehensive examination, a student must be enrolled at UNM and have announced the comprehensive exam in advance by completing the required paperwork. [See department administrator]. Following completion and approval of the comprehensive examination, the paperwork processes for completing the doctoral degree begin: **Please note that students are responsible for attending to all dissertation-related paperwork.**

1. A student is advanced to Candidacy by the Dean of Graduate Studies after the approval of the (1) Application for Candidacy for the Doctoral Degree, including a list of all coursework required for the degree; (2) Certification of Language or Research Skill Requirement form; (3) record of having passed the comprehensive examination; and 4) submission of Dissertation Committee form (available on website).
2. When the student passes the doctoral comprehensive examination, the time limit of five years for completion of all degree requirements starts. This is often referred to as the “clock starts.” The clock can be stopped for a variety of reasons, such as medical emergencies.
3. The Dissertation Committee is proposed and reviewed by program faculty and the department chair at least two weeks before the announcement of the dissertation proposal hearing.
4. The Announcement of the Dissertation Proposal Hearing form must be submitted by the department administrator to the Dean's office two weeks prior to the scheduled hearing. An announcement is posted on COE faculty and graduate student listserves and in the department office.
5. Following the Proposal Hearing, signatures of the dissertation committee and the department chair signify approval of the proposal.
6. The student submits the following to the Office of Research Ethics and Compliance for approval before beginning the study:
 - a. Institutional Review Board (IRB) proposal;
 - b. A copy of the dissertation proposal;
 - c. A copy of the signed approval form from the Proposal Hearing.
 - d. In addition, both the student and the committee chair must have completed the online IRB training prior to submission of materials. Go to <http://hsc.unm.edu/som/research/hrrc/CITI.shtml> for more information and training. To review the new website and download the new materials and application forms, please consult the IRB

Web site: <http://hsc.unm.edu/som/research/HRRC/maincampusirbhome.shtml>

7. The student informs the program of her/his intent to graduate prior to the OGS deadline (March 1 for summer graduation, July 1 for Fall graduation, October 1 for Spring graduation). This ensures the student's name is added to the list of potential graduates.
8. The student must enroll in "Dissertation: 699" every term (exclusive of summer term) until graduation. The only exception to this is if the student is graduating in summer term. Then enrollment in 699 in the summer term is required.
9. The Announcement of Final Examination for Doctorate (dissertation defense) must be submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies by the department administrator two weeks prior to the scheduled date.
 - a. Note that some departments require additional time for preparation of the form. The form must be distributed College-wide and posted on College faculty and graduate student listserves by the department administrator two weeks prior to the date of defense. OGS posts defense announcements at <http://www4.unm.edu/grad/main/dissertation/dissertation.php>.
10. Conduct the open defense hearing at the announced time and place.
11. Once a manuscript is passed, it **must** be submitted to OGS within 90 days of the dissertation defense or the student will have to re-defend.

Part VII: Dissertation Checklist for Doctoral Students

Consult with Dissertation Chair for preferences

Date Completed	Target Date	Item	Website/Form
		Advancement to Candidacy (Completion of coursework, Comprehensive Exam, Program of Studies Filed)	http://www.unm.edu/grad/forms/candiapp.html http://www.unm.edu/grad/forms/forms.html (under Graduation)
		Timeline Starts: Candidacy to Final Exam (5 year deadline begins)	
		One semester before completion of Dissertation, submit Intent to Graduate form	Intent To Graduate Form Required
		Selection of Dissertation Chair	
		Meet with Chair to Select Committee Members	http://www.unm.edu/grad/catalog/catalog13a.html
		Appointment of Dissertation Committee Form must be submitted to OGS at least Four Weeks before Proposal Hearing	See Faculty / Staff: Approval Request for Committee Service http://www.unm.edu/~grad/forms/forms.html
		Complete online IRB training	http://hsc.unm.edu/som/research/hrrc/CITI.shtml
		Consult with Chair about Proposal	
		Final Draft of Proposal to Committee at least 3 weeks prior to Proposal Hearing	
		Schedule Proposal Hearing and submit Announcement of Proposal form at least 2 weeks prior to date of Proposal Hearing	
		Proposal Hearing	

		Revisions to Chapters 1-3	
		Meet with Chair for approval to proceed on implementation	
		Implement Proposed Dissertation Protocol	
		Analyze Data and Results	
		Consult with Chair and Committee Members on analysis and results	
		Write Chapters 3-6	
		Penultimate draft to Committee Members at least 3 weeks before defense	
		Schedule Dissertation Defense at least 2 weeks prior	
		Dissertation Defense	Chair will bring Examination Form. Some committees may use additional evaluation forms. (See Manuscripts: Report on Thesis/Dissertation at: http://www.unm.edu/grad/forms/forms.html for example)
		Revisions reviewed by Chair	
		Sign up for Commencements	See Graduation: Request to Participate in University Commencement Ceremony at http://www.unm.edu/grad/forms/forms.html
		Complete Manuscript and Manuscript Forms	See Manuscripts section at: http://www.unm.edu/grad/forms/forms.html
		Final Draft to Office of Graduate Studies by graduation date	See 'Turning In Your Dissertation' at: http://www.unm.edu/grad/manuscripts/gradcheck.html
		Spring Graduation – April 15	See Manuscripts: Doctoral Dissertation/Graduation Checklist at: http://www.unm.edu/grad/forms/forms.html
		Summer Graduation-July 15	
		Fall Graduation– November 15	Info on Awards: http://www.unm.edu/grad/catalog/catalog12.html

References

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