

Oral Examination of the Phd Dissertation Proposal

Revised September 2023

Below is a summary of the key procedures required for the dissertation proposal examination at the Warner School. If you have questions, please contact studentservices@warner.rochester.edu.

The oral examination of the dissertation proposal must be taken at this University. Remote participation is permitted only if approved in advance by the advisor, the associate dean of graduate education, and the appointed examination chair.

Although you will be working with the Office of Student Services, it is the Office of the University Dean of Graduate Education (585.275.9093) that actually oversees and coordinates the work for the PhD degree in all graduate schools of the University.

- Format and Preparation of the Dissertation Proposal and Dissertation (page 2)
- Human Subjects Review (page 3)
- Before Initiating the Dissertation Proposal Exam (page 4)
- Initiating the Dissertation Proposal Exam (page 4)
- Appointment of Reader/Independent Chair, Approval of Proposal, and Scheduling of Exam (page 5)
- Conduct of the Proposal Examination (page 6)
- Reporting Results of the Examination and Admission to Candidacy (page 7)
- FORM C (at end of document)

Format and Preparation of the Dissertation Proposal and Dissertation

As a PhD student, you must adhere to the University's document on regulations regarding the preparation of the dissertation, *Formatting the Thesis and Preparing for Final Defense*. This document was prepared by the Office of the University Dean of Graduate Education. It is available at <http://www.rochester.edu/Theses/>.

Warner students are responsible ONLY for adherence to the following portions of the manual:

- Formatting your Thesis, pages 3-4
- The Order of Thesis Contents, pages 5-8
- Format of Title Page, page 10
- EXAMPLE OF Table of Contents, pages 12
- EXAMPLE OF Biographical Sketch, page 13
- EXAMPLE OF Contributors and Funding Sources, page 14
- EXAMPLE OF List of Tables, page 15

The remaining portions of the manual do not pertain to Warner students.

IMPORTANT

The style manual that must be used by Warner School students is that of the American Psychological Association (APA). However, please understand that the APA style manual does not supersede *Formatting the Thesis and Preparing for Final Defense*.

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 in this responsibility. Investigators who are planning a study involving human subjects must prepare an application package for review. No research activities can begin until approval is granted. Your study application should include the following:

- Protocol (Study Design),
- Information Letters and/or Consent Forms,
- Study Measures,
- Institutional Approval Letters,
- Data Security Assessment Form,
- And Risk Acceptance Form

The application will be submitted through the [CLICK IRB](#) 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. No Investigator may submit a study without first completing their Human Subjects' Protection Training ([CITI Training](#)). Additionally, all student investigators must have a faculty sponsor serving as a PI Proxy on the study.

The Warner School has an internal review process that provides guidance in preparing these materials prior to RSRB review (See more details in Warner's [Doctoral RSRB Checklist](#)). Training for this submittal process is required by the Warner School and held on Friday evenings several times throughout the year. The dates for the training can be found on the Warner Calendar and communicated through the monthly Student Newsletter. The training program is supported via Blackboard and recommended after Comprehensive exams have been completed. You are encouraged to discuss with your dissertation sponsor when the appropriate time to take the training is. You can also reach out to the trainers at RSRB@warner.rochester.edu for more information or to find out more details about enrolling in the training session.

In addition to your complete study application, you and your dissertation sponsor must complete an **Evaluation For Scientific Merit** for Dissertations and other Student-Led Studies involving human subjects (FORM C, at end of this document), and then submit that form to the Warner School of Education RSRB Departmental Reviewers via email at RSRB@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/Qualifying Exam has been passed.
- the required credit hours of coursework for the PhD degree have been completed.
- all required credit hours of coursework for the PhD degree have received grades—however, grades for ED 595, “PhD Research,” may be submitted by your dissertation sponsor prior to registration of the final dissertation.
- 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 each fall and spring from the semester of matriculation.
- your dissertation committee has been approved.

Initiating the Dissertation Proposal Exam

An email from you or your advisor stating the proposal has been approved for defense, with all committee members copied, along with a copy of your proposal must be sent to studentservices@warner.rochester.edu.

Appointment of Reader/Independent Chair, Approval of Proposal, and Scheduling Of Exam

- Following approval of your committee and submission of your proposal, 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.
- Once you are notified of the name and availability of the Reader/Independent Chair, you may schedule a two-hour block of time with your committee members, and contact Student Services with this. If you prefer, Student Services will assist with scheduling your proposal defense. **Please remember that proposal exams cannot be scheduled on Tuesdays, from 1:30 - 3pm.**
- The Reader/Independent Chair has three weeks to read your proposal.
- The Office of Student Services will send a notice informing all concerned of the examination day, date, time, and location of the proposal defense.
- Each member of your dissertation committee and the Reader/ Independent Chair will be emailed a copy of the proposal. It is imperative that each member of your committee has an identical copy of your proposal. If a committee member requests you provide them with a paper copy, it must be identical to the final copy submitted to the Office of Student Services.

Conduct of the Proposal Examination

- The purpose of the oral examination of the proposal is 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) Student
 - (b) Dissertation Committee
 - (c) Reader/Independent Chair
 - (d) Faculty members and other persons—with the approval of the Warner School's Associate Dean, 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 will 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.
- In the case of a student failing the examination, re-examination will be allowed unless the dissertation committee, with the concurrence of the Associate Dean, rules that no re-examination will be allowed.

Reporting Results of the Examination and Admission to Candidacy

- After the examination, the Reader/Independent Chair sends their report, which includes the committee's recommendations, to the Warner School Office of Student Services. Both you and your dissertation committee members 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 PhD degree. 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, with a copy to the Office of Student Services, stating if and when the revisions have been completed. The student will then be advanced to candidacy for the PhD degree. The student proceeds with the dissertation, guided by the committee.)

FORM C

EVALUATION FOR SCIENTIFIC MERIT FOR DISSERTATIONS AND OTHER STUDENT-LED STUDIES INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS

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 an application for a research project to RSRB for approval, the student's sponsor must first attest to the "scientific merit" of the proposed study and review the **protocol** to be sure it clearly reflects the research design as indicated below. All student projects require a Faculty Advisor.

To be completed by Doctoral Candidate/Student:

Candidate Name: _____

Sponsor's Name: _____

Proposal Title: _____

Minimal Risk#: _____ Expiration Date: _____

To be completed by Dissertation Sponsor/Faculty Supervisor:

For Dissertations provide successful Proposal Defense Date: _____

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 protocol for scientific merit as described above and believe that this protocol meets the criteria.

Sponsor's Signature: _____ Date: _____