

Preparing and defending the dissertation prospectus

Admission to candidacy for the Ph.D. requires the preparation of a detailed prospectus for original dissertation research. The prospectus should be completed during the semester following the qualifying exams, but no later than the end of the student's third year. It should be approved by the Department faculty before its final meeting of the spring term.

A student may not initiate fieldwork or other research for the dissertation until the prospectus has been approved by the Department faculty and the student has been advanced to candidacy.

The prospectus should be prepared in consultation with the student's dissertation supervisor and at least two other scholars (one of whom must be a regular member of the Department faculty). These scholars shall constitute the prospectus defense committee, to which the student must present a written version of about 2000-2500 words, prepared in a format appropriate to the subfield. The committee will convene an oral examination and discussion of that prospectus with the student. The committee may require revisions of this prospectus and additional defense meetings before giving final endorsement.

After the student has successfully defended the prospectus, the cover page must be signed by the committee and submitted to the DGS at least one week prior to the faculty meeting in which it is to be considered (which shall be no later than the penultimate spring term faculty meeting).

When the prospectus is presented to the faculty, the DGS will make copies of the prospectus available for consideration and the student's supervisor will summarize the committee's evaluation of the proposed research. Faculty approval of the prospectus is by majority vote. Failing an affirmative vote, the prospectus will be referred back to the student and the student's committee for further work.

The prospectus should represent the student's best judgment and intentions about his/her proposed dissertation research. It is in the nature of our discipline that conditions and opportunities may change in the course of the actual research. The student is free to make necessary adjustments and changes to the design, in consultation with his/her supervisor. However, if these alterations are substantial enough in topic and/or method, the student may be required to write and present another prospectus to conform to Graduate School regulations.