Student Handbook
PhD in Public Policy and Administration

BOISE STATE UNIVERSITY
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ABOUT THIS HANDBOOK

This handbook is intended to provide students in the PhD Program in Public Policy and Administration in Boise State’s School of Public Service with a detailed set of program policies, procedures, and timelines. Our hope is that this handbook will help you to be successful in this program.

It answers the most frequently asked questions for students during the various stages of the program, from application through graduation, and provides basic guidelines for you to use to track your progress through the program. We encourage you to read this handbook carefully and refer to it as you plan and make choices. Students should frequently meet with their advisor early in the program for planning purposes, and then with their Supervisory Chair once they begin preparing for comprehensive exams and the dissertation proposal.

The policies and proposals in this handbook frequently refer to two important resources: 1) the Boise State University Graduate Catalog and website, and 2) the PhD Program Website. Forms and information are frequently updated, so students should always refer to these online resources for the most up-to-date information. Additional resources and procedures, such as student services and policies on plagiarism, can also be found online.

All policies and procedures attendant to the PhD in Public Policy and Administration are subordinate to the Graduate Catalog.

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

The PhD Program in Public Policy and Administration (PPA) is housed within the School of Public Service at Boise State University. The program is designed to prepare students for senior level positions in public, non-profit, and international organizations, though occasionally students also seek positions in academic or research settings. The degree provides a sound foundation in current administrative practice in public administration and in the practice of public policy and management.

Students move through the program in stages: application, coursework, comprehensive examinations, dissertation proposal, dissertation writing, and dissertation defense. Faculty in the School of Public Service work closely with students, first as professors in seminars and coursework, then as supervisory committee members who mentor students through the exam and dissertation processes.

The study and practice of public policy and administration is inherently interdisciplinary, and students will have the opportunity to work with faculty from a variety of disciplines and backgrounds in the School of Public Service and beyond.
At the same time, the curriculum is organized to ensure that students receive a strong foundation in policy analysis that will prepare them for careers in public policy and administration.

**INFORMATION FOR APPLICANTS**

Applicants must satisfy the minimum admission requirements for the Boise State Graduate College; please see their website for more information. Admission is competitive and the achievement of minimum Graduate College and PPA requirements does not guarantee admission into the program. Applicants are required to have a Bachelor’s or Master’s degree from an accredited institution, and must comply with all application procedures.

Applicants must submit all application materials to the University by January 15 to be considered for acceptance in the cohort for the following fall term. The admission decisions are made each year in February, but applications are accepted at any time per Graduate College guidelines. Consideration of admission applications to the PPA program requires acceptance to the Boise State Graduate College and the payment of student fees.

During the application process for the online Graduate College system, applicants will be prompted to provide:

1. official transcripts submitted from all previous academic institutions,
2. names and contact information submitted for three references (references will then be asked to upload reference letters evaluating the applicant’s academic potential),
3. scores on the general test of the Graduate Record Examination (GRE), if not waived,
4. a letter of intent detailing the applicant’s educational and professional background and anticipated career objectives including how a doctoral degree might support those aspirations,
5. a sample of analytical writing, and
6. the data form

Students should consult the Graduate College and International Studies websites for the most up-to-date information regarding GRE, TOEFL, and IELTS scores required for admission.

Once the applicant’s file is complete, and during the admission decision period for the doctoral program, the PPA Admissions Committee will evaluate the applicant’s file. An admission recommendation will be forwarded by PPA to the Dean of the Graduate College. The Graduate Dean will make the final admission decision and notify the applicant and the PPA Graduate Program Committee.

**Admission Not Recommended to the Graduate College, Decision Appeal**

Applicants who are not recommended for admission to the PPA PhD program at
Boise State University may appeal this decision initially within the program. Students who are denied admission have 14 working days, from formal notification by the Program Director that the program will not recommend admission, to submit a written appeal to the Program outlining their rationale for challenging the Admission Committee’s decision. The Admissions Committee, in consultation with the Graduate College, will review that appeal and notify the student of their decision to admit or to uphold the denial of admission. If the denial is upheld upon appeal, then the applicant may appeal the program’s decision to the graduate college.

Students who are denied admission have the option to reapply once to the PhD program, but must offer substantive changes to their application materials so that the complete application file merits reconsideration. Admission is not guaranteed if a student resubmits a second application. Meeting the minimum academic requirements does not guarantee admission to the PhD program.

APPLICANT FAQS

When is the application deadline?

Applications are due to our online application system by January 15 of each year. The School of Public Service PhD admissions committee evaluates applications and then meets to discuss them in early February. Student applicants can expect to hear about the status of their application from the Boise State Graduate College soon after.

Do I need to have a master’s degree to apply?

Applicants with Master’s degrees are given preference in the admissions process, although there may be rare cases in which this requirement is waived. Student applicants who do not have a Master’s degree should contact the Program Director for more information before applying.

What needs to be included in the application?

The online system walks you through the types of information and documents you will need to provide, as does our website. But, in addition to other factors such as academic performance, the admissions committee pays special attention to 1) your letter of intent, 2) your writing sample, and 3) your letters of recommendation.

What should be in my letter of intent?

Writing the letter of intent for a PhD program differs from a letter of intent you might write for an undergraduate or even a master’s program. We encourage you to do some research about what these letters should contain, and in particular to get
feedback from those who have been through the process and/or have a stake in your success. But we tend to look for three things in particular:

1) an indication that you understand and are ready to tackle research at the doctoral level. You may not know what your dissertation topic is, but do you have a sense of what areas or research questions, broadly, you are interested in? Help us understand what makes you a good candidate for advanced research, both in terms of focus and commitment. This helps us assess if you are a good fit for our curriculum and faculty.

2) you've identified faculty in the School of Public Service you might be able to work with. Brief faculty bios are available on the School of Public Service webpage. Take some time to look these over, and to make some guesses as to who might be able to advise you through the process of taking classes, passing comprehensive exams, and crafting a dissertation. Some applicants even reach out to these faculty in advance to introduce themselves and talk about the program.

3) Tell us about your career goals. We are an applied program, designed to prepare students for senior level positions in public, non-profit and international organizations. Applicants with these career goals are given preference. Occasionally, however, we admit students seeking positions in academic or research settings. Please indicate to us why you think our program might prepare you for the career or professional path you have in mind.

What should I submit for a writing sample?

It is most helpful to the admissions committee to see a sample that illustrates your ability to do research at an advanced level. Writing samples should be clearly written, with a minimum of errors, and should exhibit your ability to analyze and synthesize complex information in a compelling way. We prefer writing samples that are solo-authored. Though we appreciate and value collaborative work, it is difficult for us to judge your writing ability on collaboratively-authored pieces.

Who should I ask to write me letters of recommendation?

Ideally, strong letter writers are able to speak about you and your accomplishments in fairly specific and illustrative ways. The committee also appreciates letters that speak to the candidate’s ability to conduct advanced-level, sustained, significant research projects. Letter writers may have all sorts of backgrounds, but letters from professors or those in public service sectors often work well, as they are able to speak best to the above qualifications.
Can I take classes in the program before I've been accepted?

Students interested in taking courses offered by the program before they've been formally accepted may do so, provided they have applied for admission to the Boise State Graduate College (this is a separate process from the program admissions process) and paid their student fees. Once accepted to the Graduate College, students may enroll in up to 9 credits of coursework, with the exception of the 600-level core courses, which are restricted to students who have been admitted.

Can I transfer in credits?

Students frequently transfer in credits from previous graduate coursework, if relevant. If you are admitted, you will work with your advisor and the Program Director to determine which courses might be transferred in. Students may transfer in a maximum of 21 credits. The program does not allow students to transfer in courses to count for any part of the methods sequence or the 600-level core courses.

Do I have to take the GRE?

Students who have a master’s degree from an accredited institution may waive the GRE requirement—you will mark this when you complete the online application.

Can I get graduate assistantships, scholarships, or other financial support?

The School of Public Service has a small number of very competitive graduate assistantships to support students. Students who receive these awards frequently receive a stipend for working 20 hours a week with faculty on research or other projects, as well as a fee waiver to cover tuition costs. Students may be covered from 1-3 years depending on the award. Students interested in these awards should apply at the time they submit their application for admission.

In some cases, faculty may also have funded research or other projects that support students in GA positions.

The program and the university have a small number of very competitive scholarships that students may apply for, and students may of course apply for loans through the financial aid office to cover expenses.

Do I need to be a full-time student in the program?

We do have some students who enroll in our program full-time. However, the program is primarily designed to accommodate part-time students, many who have careers and families. Classes are challenging, and are both reading- and writing-intensive, so the time commitment is serious. However, courses are typically scheduled in the evenings, in 3-hour blocks, to accommodate working students. Our
faculty are experienced in mentoring both full- and part-time students seeking to successfully finish the program.

**Can I take the program online?**

We are primarily a residential program, meaning students need to be able to show up, in-person, to most scheduled class sessions. We believe that there is tremendous value in the seminar-format of doctoral education, where students read challenging and important texts, and then discuss them, with professor facilitation, in groups. However, there are a few “hybrid” courses—courses where class meets in person every other week, and online for alternating weeks.

**What kinds of careers does a degree like this prepare me for?**

We are an applied program, designed to prepare students for senior level positions in public, non-profit and international organizations. Students who enroll in our program work in a variety of organizations, ranging from the Statehouse to local policy institutes to non-profit environmental organizations.

**Which professors can I work with?**

If you are admitted, you will eventually put together a “Supervisory Committee” of 3-5 faculty who will mentor you through the program. All need to have PhDs, and one of these faculty needs to be from the Public Policy and Administration program. But other committee members can come from the School of Public Service, relevant disciplines at Boise State, or even faculty from other universities.

**Who will be my advisor?**

You will be assigned an advisor when you are admitted to the program, based on your application and faculty availability. This faculty member will help you with curriculum planning and enrollment. At some point, you will assemble a Supervisory Committee, headed by a Supervisory Chair, who will mentor you through the comprehensive exam and dissertation writing processes.

**INFORMATION ON COURSEWORK**

Students should consult the Boise State Graduate Catalog for the most up-to-date course requirements.

Students who have not yet been admitted to the program may take up to 9 credits of coursework, excluding 600-level seminar courses. Pending approval by the student’s advisor and the Program Director, these credits may be used toward the student’s total required credit hours for the PhD program. These classes may be
any combination of 500-level elective credits when space is available on the roster and with instructor permission.

With approval from the student’s advisor, credits from PUBADM 595 (readings/conference) can be used toward the minimum number of required credits.

According to Boise State’s Graduate Catalog, “A Ph.D. student must be proficient in English and may be required to demonstrate a prescribed level of ability in one or more other languages. If language ability beyond proficiency in English is required, the means of verification are defined by the academic unit responsible for the program.”

The graduate catalog continues, “All Ph.D. programs must be consistent with the following restrictions. An academic unit responsible for a particular Ph.D. program may impose more stringent restrictions for that program.

**Undergraduate Courses**

An undergraduate course may be applied to meet the credit requirements of a Ph.D. degree subject to the following restrictions:

1. The course must be an upper-division course and must be in a discipline outside the major field of study of the Ph.D. program.
2. A grade of B or better must be earned in the course.
3. The course cannot represent effort for an undergraduate thesis, internship, practicum, independent study or research, conference or workshop, experiential learning, study abroad, seminar, or colloquium.

**Previously Applied Courses**

In general, any course applied to a previously earned degree or certificate of any type at any institution cannot be applied to meet the credit requirements of a Ph.D. degree. The only exception is a course applied to a master’s degree previously earned at a regionally accredited U.S. institution or non-U.S. institution approved by the Graduate College and the Registrar. Each course allowed under this exception is subject to the following additional restrictions:

1. A grade of B or better must have been earned in the course.
2. The course cannot represent effort for a graduate culminating activity or for experiential learning.

Courses allowed under this exception are limited by the fundamental requirement that at least one-half of the total credit requirement for the Ph.D. degree must be earned at Boise State University since admission to the program.

**Aggregate Restriction**

No more than one third of the total credit requirement exclusive of culminating activity credit (693 Dissertation) can be met by the sum of credits earned in undergraduate courses, pass-fail courses, and university-wide courses numbered 590, 594-596, 598, and 696 (or equivalent courses that may appear as transfer
An exception to this restriction may be considered when the courses are outside the major field of study, are taken to expand interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary educational experiences, and are approved by the academic unit and the Graduate College by an academic adjustment.”

**Readings and Conference, Independent Studies, and Directed Research**

The program has determined that students may take no more than nine (9) credits from the following categories: Readings and Conference (595), Independent Studies (596), and Directed Research (696).

### PPA Graduate Grading System

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Numeric Equivalent</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93-100%</td>
<td><strong>Excellent.</strong> “A” work shows exceptional ability to not only read and understand the material, but also demonstrate critical analytical skill in determining the strengths and weaknesses of arguments, philosophies, and comments. Distinguished work requires a consistent application of concepts with original analysis integrating literature and concepts into course work. The student initiates and effectively responds to questions. The student has demonstrated a quality of work and accomplishment far beyond the normal requirements and shows originality of thought and mastery of material.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-92.9%</td>
<td>Good. “B” work shows a good understanding of the material, marginal participation in class, and the ability to do what is asked. The student’s achievement is an acceptable level of accomplishment, showing initiative, comprehension of material, and the ability to work with concepts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89.9%</td>
<td>“B-“ work demonstrates that the student’s accomplishment, while “passing,” is deficient, demonstrating limited integration, application and analysis. Minimum requirements have been met but without distinction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83-86.9%</td>
<td>Work is technically passing, but this level of academic performance in graduate coursework at Boise State triggers probationary status when the cumulative GPA drops below 3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-82.9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Not acceptable. Student has demonstrated a minimum level of competence in meeting course objectives. See Boise State Graduate College policy regarding maintenance of a cumulative minimum GPA.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77-79.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>73-76.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70-72.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-F</td>
<td>Less than 70%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Failing work.

Course Planning

After being admitted, students should schedule a time to meet with their advisor to fill out the Program Development Form (PDF), which can be found on the program website. The PDF aids students and their advisors in mapping out which courses the student will take when, given the student’s interests and the program’s course offerings. Understanding which courses are required, course progressions (including corequisites and prerequisites), and other program requirements can ensure students complete their coursework in a timely manner.

A “Course Rotation” can be found on the program website; there, students will find a list of courses, along with when they can reasonably expect to be offered. Students should understand that sometimes events occur—such as faculty sabbaticals or curricular changes—that may affect the predicted course rotation. Therefore, PDFs should be treated more as a map for navigating the curriculum than as a contract.

Students and advisors are also encouraged to consider graduate course offerings provided by the School of Public Service and the university in general, provided they satisfy the student’s interests and course of study. Students are allowed to take a maximum of 12 credits of electives outside the PPA program (as long as the rest of their credits come from the program) and credits must be related to student’s field of study. The PhD program requires that classes taken outside the program must be taken for a grade, and students must earn an A or B to have these credits count toward their PhD.

For all Boise State classes taken outside the School of Public Service, students must complete a petition. An Academic Adjustment Form is not necessary unless the Boise State credits are being used to substitute for an existing program requirement or to supplant a previously filed Candidacy Application. Students must have prior approval from their advisor and the program director to take such courses.

The program provides quite a bit of flexibility to students when it comes to the selection of elective courses in PPA that a student may take. The program is more prescriptive, however, when it comes to the core curriculum and the methods
sequence. Students should plan to enroll in PUBADM601 during their first semester of admittance to the program, with their cohort, and PUBADM609 should be taken during the last semester of coursework before the comprehensive exams. More information about the methods sequence can be found on the program’s website.

**Duration of Study**

According to the Graduate College Catalog, “The minimum duration of study for the Ph.D. degree is three academic years beyond the baccalaureate degree. All requirements for a Ph.D. degree (including courses completed at another college or university) must be started and completed within a single continuous interval of no more than ten years. “

**Directed Research**

Students may complete up to 6 credits of Directed Research (PUBADM 696) as elective credits. Students work with a single professor (who is a member of the graduate faculty) to complete a research paper of publishable quality that includes original research. Directed Research requires a clear statement of a hypothesis or proposition, a review of the relevant literature, analysis, and synthesis of data or scholarly evidence, and inference of conclusions. Completion of an Application for Directed Research is required prior to the deadline specified in the University's semester schedule. Application must include outcomes (e.g., paper to be presented at conference; article to be submitted to journal); methods must be delineated; signatures must be completed in the order provided on the form.

**Grade Requirements**

Student must maintain a 3.0 GPA every semester. If the student fails to meet the semester GPA requirement and the failure is the second occurrence since admission to the program, the student will be administratively withdrawn from the program by the Graduate College. If the student fails to achieve a program GPA of 3.0 or better, the student is ineligible for a degree. Students cannot list a course on the Application for Admission to Candidacy if it is graded lower than a C. Transfer courses can only be listed if they are a B or higher. More information about cumulative GPA requirements can be found in the Graduate Catalog.

**Retaking PUBADM Credits/Classes**

The graduate college policy limits students to retaking only certain credits and only with written approval from the program, and limits the student to retaking a class only once. PPA does not generally authorize retaking a class. In general, students may not retake PUBADM courses regardless of whether the course was taken for graduate credit or taken as credit to be applied to an undergraduate program. If extraordinary circumstances exist, admitted PhD students may provide written
appeal of this policy to the program Director within 30 calendar days of when grades were made available to students through myboisestate.edu. Students who register for a class without approval will be administratively withdrawn.

**Transfer Credit**

PPA PhD program allows up to 21 credits to be transferred from another regionally accredited U.S. college or university. This previous coursework is subject to the restrictions and guidelines established by the Graduate College and University Registrar. All programs of study, including previously completed graduate coursework that a student wishes to apply to this program, must be approved by the student’s Supervisory Committee and PhD Program Director.
Boise State’s Graduate College encourages all graduate programs to develop formal assessment procedures. Providing a formal assessment may provide the following benefits:

1. Having students perform a self-assessment allows them to invest more fully in their educational process, reflect on their goals and achievements, and address areas of weakness or concern that need further attention.
2. Formal advisor/Chair evaluations allow faculty the opportunity to assess and provide feedback on student goals, strengths, and weaknesses. The assessment also creates documentation, which can be used to track patterns over time, increase faculty and student accountability, and discuss issues of concern or success with other committee members and/or the Program Director.

Procedure:

The evaluation form will be sent to all active students, who will complete the self-assessment portion of the evaluation by January 15. Procedural Advisors or Supervisory Chairs will need to complete their portion of the evaluation, meet with their assigned students to review, discuss, and revise, and then submit the completed and signed form to the Program Director by February 15.

The form should be filled out in language that is as specific and constructive as possible, particularly if performance areas are marked as “Needs Improvement” or “Further Action Required.” If marked “Further Action Required,” advisors must do the following:

1. Explain in writing the nature of the problem, and communicate that problem orally with the student;
2. Create a follow-up plan for re-evaluation, later in the spring semester, to confirm progress on that plan;
3. Communicate the problem and the plan for addressing the problem with the Supervisory Committee (when appropriate) and Program Director;
4. and if a student does not make satisfactory progress in a reasonable period of time following the evaluation, the advisor may need to consult with the Program Director regarding dismissal or other action.
Graduate Student Evaluation Form for Previous Calendar Year: ______

[Redacted]

Student Name: __________________ Advisor/Chair: ____________________________
Year in Program (1st, 2nd, etc.): __________ Emphasis: __________________________
Date comps taken or to be taken: __________ Date of Proposal (if done): __________

This form is intended to summarize your accomplishments in the past calendar year and indicate your plans for the coming year. Please complete, sign, and discuss this with your advisor, directly or by email. Continue on as many sheets as necessary.

Part 1: Student Self-Assessment

Academic accomplishments:

Conference and internal/informal presentations (if relevant):

Research, academic, and other goals for the coming year, including milestones to be reached (to be discussed with advisor/chair, and revised if necessary):

If relevant, courses completed in the last year (please include grades, which professor taught the course, and any comments you have on your performance):

Planned coursework for next year (if relevant):

If relevant, Graduate or Teaching Assistantships (describe and evaluate your performance):
Part 2: Student expectations of advising/mentoring/Chair relationship
Please provide me with feedback on what I can be doing to help you more, either with your progress through coursework, your preparation for comprehensive exams, preparing for the dissertation proposal, or working on your dissertation. Some ideas for what to consider when responding: What more can I, as your advisor/Chair, be doing to aid with your preparation and progress? For example, would you prefer more direction from me? More independence? How is your workload? Do you and I meet often enough? In general, what can I be doing a better job of to guide you in your research and to help prepare you for post-graduation?
Part 3: Advisor/Chair Assessment of Student (fill in blanks with descriptive comments)

Research (dissertation topic, ability to conduct quality research at a doctoral level, work ethic, overall progress)

☐ Acceptable  ☐ Needs Improvement  ☐ Further Action Required

Professionalism (conduct, presentation skills, writing skills, communication skills, meeting deadlines, project management)

☐ Acceptable  ☐ Needs Improvement  ☐ Further Action Required

Educational Progress (discuss as applicable: academic progress, career development, future goals)

☐ Acceptable  ☐ Needs Improvement  ☐ Further Action Required

Additional Comments:

I have reviewed this document with my advisor and I have seen his/her comments
Student signature ______________________________ Date ________________________
Advisor/Chair signature ______________________________ Date ____________________

The self-evaluation portion of the form is due from the student to the advisor by January 15. The completed form is due from the advisor to the Program Director by February 15.
FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Financial Aid
To receive financial aid students must be accepted into the PhD program and be enrolled in sufficient credits per University policy. Retention of financial aid is driven by University policy on satisfactory completion of academic credit.

Graduate Assistantships
Graduate assistants must be full time students (at least 9 credits). GAs may receive an “I” in a class and retain their GA position if approved by PPA. GAs demonstrating satisfactory performance in their duties may retain their position each term, if they are making satisfactory progress toward degree requirements and if PPA has sufficient funding for the position.

Conference Travel
The program aims to support students in presenting their work at conferences. Participation in conferences provides useful professionalization and research experiences and can promote our program outside of Boise State. The process for applying for and receiving program funding for conference travel should be made fair and transparent.

Policy:
1. For the purposes of funding conference travel, PhD students must be enrolled in credits (a) at the time travel arrangements are made/purchased and (b) at the time of actual conference travel.

2. Students must present either a paper or a poster during the conference (solo or co-author). Failure to do so will result in re-payment of all travel costs.

3. Students may request funding support for one conference (up to $700) or for two conferences (up to $500 each) per year during their time in the program. All costs exceeding these amounts must be born by the student and will not be covered by the Program. Preference will be given to students who have not yet received funding for conference travel from the program.

4. Students must submit the request form to the Director of the Program and, once approved by the Director and student’s advisor/committee, work with the SPS travel coordinator and Program administrative assistant in making arrangements and completing all required paperwork. Chairs are responsible for making sure that conferences align with the student’s academic and professional goals, and that students
are well prepared to present.

5. Students who are funded to present at conferences must present their work to students and faculty in the School of Public Service before presenting at the conference, in order to gain practice presenting and to receive feedback on the presentation.

Conference Travel Funds Request Form
PhD Program in Public Policy and Administration

Name: ______________________________

Name of conference: _______________________________________________________________

Date of conference: ____________________________

Conference location: _______________________________________________________________

Description of your participation (include an explanation of how participation relates to your academic or career goals):

Funding amount requested: $ ______

Description of how funding will be used:

Have you been funded by the program in the past? Please explain.

Approved ___ Denied (if denied, provide justification)___

Student Signature: _________________________________________________________________

Advisor/Supervisory Chair Signature: _______________________________________________

Program Director Signature: _______________________________________________________

ADVISING

Supervisory Committee

Upon admission to the program, the doctoral student will be assigned an academic advisor who will assist the student in completing the Program Development Form. Over time, the advisor will work with the doctoral student to identify a Supervisory Committee Chair with expertise in the student’s emphasis area during the first or second year of the program. The Chair of the Supervisory Committee serves as the student’s principal advisor.

The program recommends that students begin to form their committee prior to enrolling in PUBADM609 if not before. Students may work with the Supervisory Committee Chair to choose faculty who will form the Supervisory Committee. This committee has a minimum of three, but not more than five members, the majority of whom must hold a faculty appointment in the PPA program and be members of the Graduate Faculty of the university. Members from outside the university who hold a PhD may also serve on the committee; they will need to apply for nomination to the Graduate Faculty by the Graduate College.

The Supervisory Committee provides general guidance in the design and approval of the program of study, administration of the comprehensive examination, participation in the assessment of the dissertation proposal, supervision of the dissertation research, and participation in the dissertation defense. Committee composition may be modified as necessary as students proceed through these various stages, but forms must be updated through the Program and Graduate College.

Graduate Faculty Representative (GFR) - Required for PhD and EdD Students

The GFR at Boise State University serves as a symbol of campus-wide fairness, upholds the rigor of the graduate process, and is an impartial representative of the Graduate College to the doctoral student and their supervisory committee. The GFR serves as a nonvoting member of their Supervisory Committee, and during the defense procedure is responsible for making sure that each element of the defense is conducted in a way that is consistent with Graduate College guidelines. The GFR must be a member of the Graduate Faculty, cannot be an Affiliate, Adjunct or Emeritus member of the Graduate Faculty, and cannot be a member of the Graduate Program or College (or affiliated programs in the case of an interdisciplinary program,) that is granting the doctoral degree. A list of current Graduate Faculty is available on the Graduate College website.

COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION

Beyond superior effort in coursework, students seeking the distinction of Doctor of Philosophy in Public Policy and Administration must successfully complete three
reviews of assessment: a PhD comprehensive examination, an oral presentation of the student’s dissertation proposal, and the public presentation and defense of the dissertation. The comprehensive exam for this degree marks the culminating event for the first stage of the PhD in Public Policy and Administration.

Doctoral students are eligible to sit for their comprehensive examination after the public policy and administration core (18 credits), the methods sequence (12 credits) and the designated doctoral seminar for the selected emphasis (3 credits). This means that students may take their comprehensive examination after completing 33 credits toward the doctorate, but must complete the exam prior to completing 48 credits, exclusive of PUBADM 693.

Faculty members in the PPA program have developed reading lists and core concept lists in Public Administration and Public Policy; these are available to all program faculty. Supervisory Chairs will make these resources available to students, and students should use these resources, in addition to their own studies and preparation, to prepare for the comprehensive exam.

**Comprehensive Examination Structure**

Students may schedule the comprehensive exams when they wish, with the following stipulations:

1) Students are strongly encouraged to take comprehensive exams within one year of completing coursework. Failure to do so will result in a negative yearly student evaluation.

2) Supervisory Chairs and Committees must agree to the proposed date. Faculty are not obliged to work with students when faculty are off-contract.

3) Students are still bound by credit-hour enrollment and semester schedules, i.e., when a student enrolls for comprehensive exam credits, they must finish the exam process in time to receive a grade for those credits. Receiving incompletes for comprehensive exam credits is possible, but not encouraged, so students should talk through the timing of enrollment and exams carefully with their Supervisory Chairs.

4) All other guidelines, described below, must be followed.

Students are given one full week (seven days, from Monday, 8am, to Monday, 8am) to complete the exams. Students may use any resources at their disposal to write the exam, but all submitted written and intellectual work must be completed by the student and only the student. Plagiarism, relying on or paying
others to do work on the exam, or otherwise copying responses or material will result in a failed comprehensive exam, with no possibility of retake.

Responses to each of the three written exam questions (see below) are limited to 3,000 words each (for a total of 9,000 words, excluding bibliographic references). All outside resources should be properly cited according to APA style. Exams should be typed and double-spaced and submitted as Word documents to the Committee no later than 8am on the Monday at the end of the exam period.

The exam is composed of four parts:
1) **Public Administration**: Supervisory committees will select an appropriate question from the PA Exam bank. Students will not have access to the question in advance of the testing period.
2) **Public Policy**: Supervisory committees will select an appropriate question from the Policy Exam bank. Students will not have access to the question in advance of the testing period.
3) **Open Question**: Students will work with their Supervisory Committees to develop one question in an area of their choosing. No later than one month prior to the exam period, students must submit their draft question and accompanying reading list to the committee for feedback. The committee has one week to provide feedback on the student’s proposed question and reading list. This question will then be provided, along with the two questions described above, at the beginning of the exam period.
4) **Oral Examination**: Written exams will be graded by three members of the Supervisory Committee (see below). Once grades have been submitted to the Supervisory Chair, the Chair will provide specific, qualitative feedback (not specific grades) to the student regarding areas needing improvement, expansion, or further discussion. These areas will form the foundation of the oral examination. Oral examinations will be scheduled within two weeks after the written examinations have been graded, and will last approximately 90 minutes. They will be closed to anyone except the Supervisory Committee and student, unless the Supervisory Committee has requested that the Program Director attend. Following the oral exam, the Supervisory Committee will confer regarding whether the individual grades on the written exams merit “pass” or “fail.”

**Grading**

Each of the three written exam questions will be graded pass (P) or fail (F) by the three members of the Supervisory Committee doing the grading (if committees are larger than three, the Supervisory Chair should designate three to grade). Graders will receive responses on the Monday morning at the end of the exam period, and should have exams graded by the morning of Friday of that same week (giving four full days to grade). Graders should indicate to the Supervisory Chair whether they
would mark the exams as “pass with distinction,” “pass,” “low pass,” or “fail.” The committee will then follow the oral exam procedure described above and confirm or revise written exam grades.

Supervisory Chairs will compile exam results and communicate them to the Program Director in writing, indicating whether each of the three written exams receives a “pass” or “fail.” The Director will then communicate the results to the student.

If a student clearly and distinctively passes all exam blocks, the Program will submit a grade of pass (P) for the PubAdm 691 credits, and the student is authorized to begin the dissertation phase of the program. If a student fails part or all of the comprehensive examination, then the Program must follow the policy and procedures outlined in the Graduate Catalog at Boise State University, described below.

If the Program Director determines, in conjunction with the Supervisory Committee chair, that all or part of a student’s written comprehensive exam is unsatisfactory, the student may have the option of addressing deficiencies in either an oral or written defense in the same semester in which the exam was initially administered, as determined by the Supervisory Committee and Director. The Program Director will advise students of the preliminary result of the exam and set the date for any secondary assessment (oral or written). The appeal panel in these cases will be comprised of the individuals who graded the original submission.

If the committee determines that the student fails the exam in its entirety, the student is given the option to take the entire exam again the following semester. The student has ONE opportunity to retake comprehensive exams. The second exam will be composed of entirely new questions.

**Dissertation Proposal**

Students should carefully review the Graduate College catalog for information about registering for dissertation credits, and requirements for writing the dissertation.

**Dissertation Proposal Process**

**Written proposal:** Students should work closely with their Supervisory Chair in order to determine an appropriate timeline for submitting the 25-30 page written proposal to their committee and receiving feedback before the oral defense. Generally speaking, if a student’s written proposal contains serious problems or deficits, these should be addressed before the oral defense is scheduled.

**Scheduling the oral defense:** Once the committee has provided feedback and agreed that the student is ready to schedule the oral defense, the student should
work with the Supervisory Chair and the Program Director to schedule the defense. The defense is not open to the public, although other SPS faculty members may be invited to attend, provided all committee members and the student approve and have a good justification for the invitation.

**Oral proposal defense structure:** Students should prepare an approximately 30-minute oral presentation for the committee, followed by an approximately 30-minute question-and-answer and/or discussion period. The student will then be asked to leave the room so the committee can deliberate. Once the committee has made a decision (pass, pass with conditions, fail) the student should be invited back in and informed of the decision. Any conditions should be communicated then. The Supervisory Chair is responsible for communicating the outcome of the defense to the Program Director, and providing a copy of the Dissertation Proposal Competency form (below) to the student, committee members, Program Assistant, and Program Director for inclusion in the student’s file.

**Pass:** If all committee members agree that the student has passed without conditions, the student is approved to begin work on the dissertation writing process, in consultation with the Supervisory Chair and committee.

**Pass with conditions:** If the committee agrees that the student passes but must meet certain conditions to proceed, those conditions should be clearly articulated on the Dissertation Proposal rubric, along with a plan of action, including a timeline, for how the conditions will be addressed. The Supervisory Chair is responsible for communicating expectations and updates with the rest of the committee, the student, and the Program Director.

**Fail:** If the committee believes the student has failed the Dissertation Proposal, the student, Supervisory Chair, and Program Director should schedule an in-person meeting to map out a course of action, including creating a process whereby appropriate and constructive feedback will be provided the student, and a timeline for rescheduling the proposal defense, if appropriate.
**Dissertation Proposal Competency Review**  
PhD in Public Policy and Administration, Boise State University

Student Name: _______________________________  Student ID#:________________________  
Date: ______________________ Term Dissertation Proposal completed:________________  
Title of Project: ________________________________________________________________

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Comments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Clear statement of appropriate project topic</strong></td>
<td>Clear statement of project topic</td>
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<td>Argues for significance of project topic</td>
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<td>Importance and sophistication of project commensurate with doctoral level</td>
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<td>Identifies objective project hopes to accomplish</td>
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<td><strong>Literature Review and Conceptual/Theoretical Framework</strong></td>
<td>Identifies conceptual framework/theoretical framework/paradigm</td>
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<td>Thorough summary of relevant literature</td>
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<td>Uses professional or academic sources</td>
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<td>Identifies gap in literature study aims to fill</td>
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<td>Reflects critical evaluation of sources</td>
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<td><strong>Scope and Methodology</strong></td>
<td>Clearly formulates what project will accomplish: Research questions and/or hypotheses</td>
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<td>Methodology is appropriate for scope and topic</td>
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<td>Methodology is feasible</td>
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<td>Methodology is sufficiently detailed to be carried out</td>
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<td>Methodology maps on to stated project goals</td>
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### Timeline

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<tr>
<th>Remarks on presentation</th>
<th>Articulates plan for securing IRB approval, if relevant</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contains clearly presented timeline for accomplishing project goals; schedule is feasible</td>
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<tr>
<th>Remarks on presentation</th>
<th>Cogent oral presentation</th>
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<tr>
<td>Concise presentation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Committee questions responded to in an appropriate manner</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Criticisms handled appropriately</td>
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<tr>
<td>Written presentation is effective and well written</td>
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</table>

**Outcome of dissertation proposal defense** (circle one):

- Pass
- Pass with conditions (please describe):
- Fail

**Summary comments:**

Supervisory Committee Chair Signature: __________________________
Committee Member Signature: __________________________
Committee Member Signature: __________________________
Committee Member Signature: __________________________
Committee Member Signature: __________________________

**Next steps:**

- All committee members may fill out this form, but the Supervisory Chair is responsible for synthesizing feedback onto one form for submission. Copies of the master form will be given to the student, committee members, Program Assistant, and Program Director following the defense.
- If Pass or Pass with Conditions: student is ready to submit the [Application for Admission to Candidacy](#) (AAC).
DISSERTATION REQUIREMENTS

Graduate students and Supervisory Committees should work closely with the Graduate College in the preparation of the dissertation manuscript and in ensuring all appropriate paperwork has been completed.

Dissertation Grading

According to the Graduate College, “All 693 Dissertation credits are graded in-progress (IP) until a final grade of either pass (P) or fail (F) is assigned by the academic unit responsible for the program. A grade of pass (P) is assigned to all 693 credits if the final oral examination is passed, and a grade of fail (F) is assigned to all 693 credits if the student fails the final oral examination. See Final Oral Examination and Failure of the Final Oral Examination (below).”

Final Dissertation Approvals and Procedures

The dissertation for PPA should demonstrate the student’s mastery of best practices in research for public policy and administration and should reflect original research that advances policy and/or public administration scholarship. Students should work with the Program Director and their supervisory committee to ensure adequate progress.

Policy on Dissertation Models

PPA PhD Student Profile: The PhD program in Public Policy and Administration (PPA) primarily admits students interested in conducting applied policy analyses in the fields of public administration and/or public policy. As a result, the majority of our students enroll in the program in order to master applied research skills that will enable them to advance in careers they already have, or because this training will open up additional career opportunities for them. At the same time, PPA faculty expect, and the Graduate College policies and procedures clearly articulate, that doctoral candidates will conduct independent research, using evidence, that makes a contribution to the state of knowledge in their chosen field:

Original research carried out by a student at the doctoral level is documented by a dissertation. A dissertation is characterized by a clearly stated proposition or hypothesis that is investigated using analysis and synthesis of data or other scholarly evidence. The dissertation must demonstrate mastery of the relevant literature and the ability of the student to independently and successfully address a substantial intellectual problem with concepts and methods that are accepted in the major field of study (2016-17 Graduate Catalog).

Traditional Format: Given the PPA PhD student profile, in practice, faculty in Public Policy and Administration advise the majority of PPA PhD students to write
their dissertations in what might be considered a traditional or “monograph” format. This format often includes sections such as an introduction, literature review, methodology, presentation of data, and discussion of implications.

3-Essay Format Justification: However, there are rare cases in which a student would be better served by an alternative dissertation model. For example, although the student profile described above is the most common in PPA, occasionally the program admits students who have, or over the course of their studies develop, an interest in careers in academe or other organizations where peer-reviewed research is expected. In these cases, it may best serve the student and his or her committee to adopt a 3-essay model, with the outcome being that a student would be able, at some point, to turn these essays into peer-reviewed articles.

3-Essay Format Guidelines: The student’s Supervisory Committee is largely responsible for ensuring the student is doing quality, doctoral-level research. The PPA PhD program Director and Graduate College Dean and staff perform checks to ensure policies and procedures are being met. As a result, committees are responsible for ensuring that all dissertations meet the requirements stated above in the Graduate Catalog, regardless of format.

However, the PPA program has agreed on some general guidelines for students wishing to adopt the 3-essay alternative format:

1) The doctoral candidate and his or her committee must have articulated an appropriate and convincing reason for adopting the 3-essay format (e.g., the student is interested in applying for a position where having publication-ready chapters will make the student more competitive on the job market).

2) The 3-essay format typically consists of an introduction, a minimum of three related essays (each of which is of publishable quality in a peer-reviewed journal), and a conclusion, along with whatever other materials committees may deem necessary. Committees should take into careful consideration the student’s training, abilities, and timeline before agreeing to a 3-essay format.

3) The decision to use the 3-essay format needs to be approved by the Program Director.

4) In PPA, the expectation is that the student will be the sole-author of each of the three essays. However, the program may make rare exceptions to this rule, such as when a student is working on a collaborative project (as is often the case with funded research) where other contributors need to be acknowledged as secondary authors. Even in these cases, though, students and their committees must be able to demonstrate that the bulk of the research and writing was conducted independently by the student, and students must be first-author on all work submitted for the dissertation. Authorship agreements must be approved by the student’s supervisory committee and the Program Director.
5) Each of the 3 essays in the dissertation will need to feature the elements of a typical peer-reviewed article in the student’s discipline. Elements in one essay may not repeated (i.e., cut and pasted) into another essay, though some overlap in sections such as literature review or methodology may be expected, as they would for any scholar publishing multiple pieces in the same area. In short, committees must ensure that students working under the 3-essay format are completing independent, quality work that they agree is potentially publishable according to standards of peer-review.

**Sample Schedule for Writing and Receiving Feedback on the Dissertation**

The schedule below, drafted by one of our first graduates (Stephanie Lenhart) provides an example of a schedule a student might create in concert with their committee for writing and receiving feedback on the dissertation. Note that graduate student deadlines, time for faculty reflection and feedback, revision time, and a few “slack” weeks are built in to the schedule.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DRAFT SCHEDULE FOR SSL DISSERTATION*</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Revised 9/14/16</strong></td>
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</table>
| **Week 1** | **8/29** | **Coding Schema**
| **SSL** | **JS** | **Advisor Meetings** |
| **Week 2** | **9/5** | **Circulate AAC** |
| **SSL to BSU Members** | |
| **Week 3** | **9/12** | **Reframe Chapters** |
| **BSU Members** | |
| **Week 4** | **9/19** | **Chpt. 2** |
| **Outside Members** | |
| **Week 5** | **9/26** | **Return Chpt. 2** |
| **Grad College Deadlines** | |
| **Week 6** | **10/3** | **Check-In Meeting** |
| **Week 7** | **10/10** | **Chpt. 2** |
| **AAC Due 10/7** | |
| **Week 8** | **10/17** | **Return Chpt. 2** |
| **Week 9** | **10/24** | **Check-In Meeting** |
| **Week 10** | **10/31** | **Chpt. 3** |
| **Week 11** | **11/7** | **Return Chpt. 3** |
| **Week 12** | **11/14** | **Chpt. 4** |
| **Week 13** | **THANKSGIVING** | |
## DRAFT SCHEDULE FOR SSL DISSERTATION*
Revised 9/14/16

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>SSL</th>
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<th>Advisor Meetings</th>
<th>SSL to BSU Members</th>
<th>BSU Members</th>
<th>Outside Members</th>
<th>Grad College Deadlines</th>
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<tr>
<td>Week 14</td>
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<td>Return Chpt. 4</td>
<td>Check-In Meeting</td>
<td>Chpt. 4</td>
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<td>11/28</td>
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<td>Week 15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 16</td>
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<td>Chpt. 1</td>
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<td>Return Chpt. 4</td>
<td>Review Draft</td>
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<td>12/12</td>
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**WINTER BREAK**

Apply for May Grad and Begin Formatting

| Week 17 |     |    | Revised Draft to Outside Members | Check-In Meeting | Chpt. 1 and Chpt. 5 | Chpt. 1 and Chpt. 5 | Apply for May Grad 1/13 |
| 1/9     |     |    |                                 |                  |                      |                      |                        |
| Week 18 |     |    | Notice of Defense to Grad College |                  |                      |                      |                        |
| 1/16    |     |    |                                 |                  |                      |                      |                        |
| Week 19 |     |    | Formatting / Front and Back Matter |                    |                      | Return Draft 1/27    | Return Draft 1/27      |
| 1/23    |     |    |                                 |                  |                      |                      |                        |
| Week 20 |     |    |                                 | Check-In Meeting |                      |                      |                        |
| 1/30    |     |    |                                 |                  |                      |                      |                        |
| Week 21 |     |    | Revised Draft                 |                    |                      |                      |                        |
| 2/6     |     |    |                                 |                  |                      |                      |                        |
| Week 22 |     |    | Defense                       |                    |                      |                      |                        |
| 2/13    |     |    |                                 |                  |                      |                      |                        |
| Week 23 |     |    |                                 |                    |                      |                      |                        |
| 2/20    |     |    |                                 |                  |                      |                      |                        |
| Week 24 |     |    |                                 |                    |                      |                      |                        |
| 2/27    |     |    |                                 |                  |                      |                      |                        |
| Week 25 |     |    | Submit to Grad College         |                    |                      |                      |                        |
| 3/6     |     |    |                                 |                  |                      |                      |                        |
| Week 26 |     |    |                                 |                    |                      |                      |                        |
| 3/13    |     |    |                                 |                  |                      |                      |                        |

Last Day to Submit Approved Dissertation

---

*Note: The schedule is subject to change based on feedback and progress.*

**Advisors' Meeting Notes:**

- **Week 14**: SSL and JS discuss the revising of Chapter 4. JS checks the initial review of Chpt. 4.
- **Week 15**: SSL and JS meet to review Chpt. 5.
- **Week 16**: SSL and JS meet to finalize Chpt. 1 and Chpt. 5.

**Important Dates:**

- **11/21**: Revision deadline for Chpt. 4.
- **11/28**: Submission of Chpt. 4.
- **12/5**: Review of Chpt. 5.
- **12/12**: Submission of Chpt. 1.
- **1/9**: Revised draft submitted to outside members.
- **1/13**: Final review of Chpt. 1 and Chpt. 5.
- **1/16**: Defense notice to grad college.
- **1/23**: Formatting completion.
- **1/30**: Check-in meeting.
- **2/6**: Revised draft submission.
- **2/13**: Defense meeting.
- **2/20**: Graduation college formatting.
- **2/27**: Submission to grad college.
- **3/6**: Submission of Chpt. 1 and Chpt. 5.
- **3/13**: Last day to submit approved dissertation.
DRAFT SCHEDULE FOR SSL DISSERTATION*
Revised 9/14/16

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<tr>
<th>SSL</th>
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<th>Outside Members</th>
<th>Grad College Deadlines</th>
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</thead>
</table>

*List of Chapters
1. Introduction
   - Frame and research question
   - Methods
2. Context
3. Interaction Among Fields and Legitimate Authority
4. Social Practices and Strategies
5. Discussion/Conclusions: The Formation of a Western RTO and a Change in Discourse

Dissertation Defense and Final Oral Examination

According to the Boise State Graduate Catalog, “A Ph.D. student must pass a final oral examination that rigorously and deeply probes the ability of the candidate to describe and defend all aspects of the dissertation research in both a public setting and in a private conference with experts.”

“The final oral examination for a Ph.D. student (also called a defense) must consist of three sequential parts in which the student presents and defends the dissertation research: 1) a public presentation, 2) a public question and answer session, and 3) a private question and answer session with a committee of experts known as the defense committee. The final oral examination should occur no later than the date specified in the academic calendar; this date is set to allow time for final revision and processing of the dissertation so that a student who passes the final oral examination has a reasonable chance for graduation in the same semester or session.

Announcement of the public presentation to the university community is required and should precede the presentation by at least two weeks. The defense committee must include the entire supervisory committee plus a nonvoting graduate faculty representative (GFR) appointed by the Dean of the Graduate College. The GFR must be a member of the Graduate Faculty and a member of an academic unit not represented on the supervisory committee. The GFR conducts all three parts of the final oral examination according to procedures established by the Graduate College.”

While GFR representation is mandated by the Graduate College, having a “external examiner” present is left up to individual program discretion. Students in PPA are not required to have an external examiner attend or be involved in the dissertation defense.

The catalog continues, “The result of a final oral examination for a Ph.D. student can only be reported as pass or fail. The determination of pass or fail is by a vote of the
voting members of the defense committee with a simple majority determining the outcome unless the academic unit responsible for the program requires a unanimous vote for pass. If a tie vote occurs, then the student is considered to have failed the final oral examination. A result of pass is immediately documented by the signatures of the voting members of the defense committee on the Defense Committee Approval form that is to be bound with the paper copies of the thesis. A result of fail is immediately documented on a Report of Failure of a Final Oral Examination form that is submitted to the Graduate College by the GFR. See Failure of the Final Oral Examination (below).”

**Failure of the Final Oral Examination**

“Failure of a final oral examination (any attempt by a Ph.D. student) is documented by submission of a Report of Failure of a Final Oral Examination form to the Graduate College and by submitting the appropriate grade for 693 Dissertation as described in this section. A final oral examination that is failed on the first attempt can be repeated once, but only if a second attempt is requested by the student and approved by the academic unit responsible for the program. The request by the student for a second attempt must be in writing to the head of the academic unit and must be made within five working days after the student is notified of his or her failure. If a second attempt is not requested by the student, or if a request is made by the student but not approved by the academic unit, then a grade of (F) is assigned to all 693 credits and the student is dismissed from the program by the Graduate College. If the student’s request is approved by the academic unit, then the second attempt must occur within twelve months after the first attempt, and IP grades are maintained for all 693 credits until the result of the second attempt is known. If the student does not make a second attempt within twelve months after the first attempt, or if the student fails the second attempt, then a grade of (F) is assigned to all 693 credits and the student is dismissed from the program by the Graduate College. Any extension of the twelve-month limit on the repeat attempt must be approved by the academic unit and by the Dean of the Graduate College.”

After the Supervisory Committee has approved the dissertation as a final version, the student will work with his or her Supervisory Committee to schedule the final oral examination in which the student will defend the dissertation.