

**A PROCEDURAL GUIDE FOR
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY STUDENTS
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AND FAMILY STUDIES
AUBURN UNIVERSITY**

updated August 2015

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INTRODUCTION

The Doctor of Philosophy is conferred in recognition of the mastery of a special field of learning as shown by the satisfactory completion of a prescribed course of study and investigation, the successful passing of general examinations covering the major and minor fields, the preparation of an acceptable dissertation reflecting high achievement in scholarship and independent investigation, and the passing of a final examination on the dissertation and related subjects. The degree is a research degree not conferred merely upon fulfillment of technical requirements, but awarded in recognition of the ability to think and work independently, originally, and creatively in a chosen field.

(Italicized material throughout the text of the guide has been selectively drawn (or edited) from the graduate school web page and indicates stated policies or definitions of the Auburn University Graduate School. For more complete information go to <http://www.grad.auburn.edu/>.)

During your first year in the Ph.D. program in the Department of Human Development and Family Studies (HDFS) you will make a number of important decisions. These decisions will influence not only the direction of your doctoral training but also the course of your early career. First, you will select your major professor and the advisory committee that will direct your studies and examine your progress at several critical points during your program. Second, you will develop your tentative plan of study to identify the courses you will take as electives and supporting emphases. Third, you will begin planning for the specific skills you will develop and experiences you will pursue in preparation for your career. This guide is intended to clarify the purposes of, and procedures associated with, each of these decisions. Ultimately, you are responsible for learning and following departmental and graduate school policies and procedures.

APPOINTING A TEMPORARY ADVISOR

If you have entered the doctoral program in HDFS without coming through our master's program and you have not specified a faculty member as your preferred major advisor, the graduate program officer (GPO) will serve as your temporary advisor. As temporary advisor, the GPO will advise you regarding your first semesters course of study. During that first semester, however, you will need to identify a faculty member to serve as your permanent major professor. The process of selecting a major professor and advisory committee is important and is taken up in detail in the following sections.

SELECTING THE PERMANENT ADVISOR (MAJOR PROFESSOR)

You may select a permanent advisor at any time during your first semester of study, but it is important to your progress in the program that s/he is selected no later than the first week of Spring semester of your first year. The advisor must be a member of the Graduate Faculty and eligible to direct doctoral students. In making your selection, you should set individual appointments with *at least* two faculty members who appear to have professional and research interests congruent with your own. During the appointments, you should evaluate the fit between your own interests and the relevant professional and research interests of each potential major professor. In addition, you should discuss with each professor their style of mentoring. Beyond questions you arrive at on your own or in conversations with other students who have already made these decisions, consider getting answers to the following questions:

- * How many students is the faculty member working with? (Sometimes having a lot of students means an advisor will be too busy for you; sometimes it means the advisor is especially effective as a mentor. Get the names of some of the professors' advisees and talk with them before committing to an advisor.)

- * How connected to the professor's research program are students encouraged to be? (Put differently, will you work with the professor on his/her own research program or will you be allowed [required] to pursue an interest that is entirely your own? There are advantages and disadvantages to going each way. Talk about them. Again talk with current advisees of the professor you are considering.)
- * How available is the professor to students?
- * What kinds of opportunities will a student have if working with the particular professor? (To the extent that you know what you want to do with your degree, you will also be able to identify [with the assistance and advice of your major advisor and advisory committee] experiences that will promote your capacity to be competitive for that kind of career. Will you have opportunities to get those experiences while working with the advisors you are considering? Talk about what kinds of teaching experiences you will get working with a particular professor. What kinds of research experiences will you get? Will there be publication opportunities? Grant writing opportunities? What kinds of opportunities will you get to apply your knowledge in the service of others or in a policy context?)

Avoid making a snap decision about your major professor. Before making such a momentous decision, you should not only consider all appropriate faculty prospects, but also talk with other students who have worked with the professor you are considering. Identifying appropriate prospects is facilitated by using the list of faculty with research interests listed on the HDFHS web page. In addition, there are several events that take place early in each academic year that help students recognize faculty and identify their current interests. Finally, a brief discussion with the department head or GPO can be helpful in directing you to faculty who would be appropriate to your interests.

It rarely, but sometimes, happens that doctoral students wish to change their major professor, or major professors may want to discontinue their role with a student. On such occasions, the student and advisor are encouraged to meet and discuss their wishes and to attempt to arrive at a mutually acceptable arrangement. If these direct negotiations are not successful, however, the student and/or faculty member should approach the GPO or department head. A change of major professor requires that the student notify the Graduate School via email with copies to the former and new major professors as well as the GPO and department head. A critical fact that students must keep in mind is that no student can progress in their program without a major professor. Hence, discontinuation from one major professor must be accompanied by realignment with another for the student to continue in the program.

FORMING THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

You may select an advisory committee only after selecting a major professor. The advisory committee is always selected in consultation with the major professor. It is important to select the advisory committee in the Spring semester of your first year of study. Provide written notification of your selections of major professor and committee members to the GPO when your decisions have been made and the members have all agreed to participate. Use the departmental form *Notification of Major Professor and Doctoral Advisory Committee*.

Things to consider when selecting your advisory committee include the theoretical/methodological fit between your major professor and the prospective committee member, the general interest domain and specific content area of the prospect's specialization, and the degree to which the major professor is able to work well with the prospective member. The major professor's input is critical in the selection of the advisory committee. Because these selections are so important to your doctoral graduate experience, they should not be made without discussing them with your major professor.

The graduate school indicates that: *The advisory committee is responsible for developing the student's plan of study and conducting the doctoral general and final examinations. It should consist of at least four members of the graduate faculty. A majority of the Auburn University affiliated committee members, including the major professor, must be members of the Graduate Faculty, Level 2. The major professor must also be a graduate faculty member of the program granting the degree.* Faculty eligible for directing doctoral students as major professor have considerable experience advising thesis or dissertation research, they have considerable research experience themselves, and they remain active in the process of research. Although the majority of advisory committee

members must share this highest standing on the Graduate Faculty (Level 2), the primary criterion for the selection of advisory committee members is the fit between the students dissertation interest and the faculty members expertise. The goal is to ensure that each doctoral student has the best combination of advisors and examiners available given his/her research interests. The student and major professor will collaborate in identifying the committee that best fulfills this goal.

HDFS Graduate Faculty:

Ellen Abell, Ph.D.**
Francesca Adler-Bader, Ph.D.*
Adrienne Duke, Ph.D.**
Mona El-Sheikh, Ph.D.*
Stephen A. Erath, Ph.D.*
Thomas Fuller-Rowell, Ph.D.**
Megan Haselschwerdt, Ph.D.**
Ben Hinnant, Ph.D.**
Margaret K. Keiley, Ed.D.*
Jennifer L. Kerpelman, Ph.D.*
Scott A. Ketring, Ph.D.*
Jacquelyn Mize, Ph.D.*
Gregory Pettit, Ph.D.*
Joe F. Pittman, Jr., Ph.D.*
Amy Rauer, Ph.D.*
Diana Samek, Ph.D.**
Thomas A. Smith, Ph.D.*
Donna L. Sollie, Ph.D.*
Brian E. Vaughn, Ph.D.*

*Can direct dissertations and serve on advisory committees

** Can serve on advisory committees and direct dissertations with a co-chair

Some students may wish to have members on their advisory committee from outside Auburn University, such as a scholar from another university. Graduate school policy indicates that: *Affiliate faculty and other scholars not employed by the University may serve on individual advisory committees with the approval of the Dean of the Graduate School. Such approval does not imply Graduate Faculty membership. The department head or other appropriate administrative officer should forward a recommendation for approval along with the scholarly credentials of the individual to the Graduate School for review and subsequent action.*

The formal appointment of the advisory committee occurs when the Plan of Study (accessed through tiger i after logging on to AU Access, <https://auaccess2.auburn.edu/cp/home/displaylogin>) is approved by the graduate school. Any change in the membership of a student's advisory committee must be reported to the Graduate School via email with copies to the former and new committee members as well as the committee chair.

PLAN OF STUDY

By the end of the first year in the HDFS program, after selections of major professor and advisory committee have been made, each student in consultation with his or her major professor and advisory committee should prepare the Plan of Study (i.e., Planner) and file it with the graduate school. In HDFS, the development and review of the Plan of Study is part of the students first annual evaluation (see below). In this section, course requirements for the Plan of Study specified by the graduate school are clarified.

Graduate School Course Requirements for the Plan of Study

The minimum number of hours in a doctoral program is 60 semester hours earned through instruction beyond the bachelor's degree, including 1) a minimum of 30 semester hours of graded (e.g., A, B) graduate course work (6000-

level and above) and 2) a minimum of 30 semester hours of additional graduate course work (6000-level and above) that may include ungraded courses, 7990 (Thesis Research) and 8990 (Dissertation Research) and must include at least 10 hours of 8990. Some programs require more than 60 semester hours, and requirements may vary according to a student's background and interests.

The total number of credit hours that may be transferred from another accredited institution toward a doctoral degree varies by program but must be less than 50% of the credit hours listed on the Plan of Study. Such transfer credit 1) must fall within the time limits of the degree, and 2) must be approved by the advisory committee and the Dean of the Graduate School. A maximum of 4 hours of 7990 from a completed master's program may be counted. You may enroll in 8990 at any time during your program that your advisor considers appropriate. However, the number of 8990 hours taken in any given semester should reflect the amount of time being spent that semester on the dissertation and the degree to which university resources are being utilized. No grade is assigned to 8990 hours.

PROFESSIONAL SOCIALIZATION GUIDELINES

Working toward the Ph.D. is qualitatively different from working on an undergraduate or even a master's degree. You are expected to work more independently (i.e., in a more self-motivated, self-directed way) and to perform at a higher level, producing better quality work. At this stage in your scholarly development you are being trained as a professional colleague. Thus, over your doctoral program you should increasingly identify yourself as a professional rather than a student. Being successful in the Ph.D. program in HDFS, and later in the larger professional world, requires more than just completing a specified number of courses, passing exams, and completing a dissertation. It involves learning to work with other professionals through the development of various relationship and leadership skills and gaining knowledge of professional protocol, as well as the development of various research and academic skills. To gain these competencies your committee will recommend experiences and provide feedback regarding research, teaching, and service. To develop professional relationship skills and to acquire knowledge of basic professional protocol you will observe and experience various professional situations, again at the recommendation of your advisor and committee.

Good time management is essential to accomplishing all that will be required of you. You will need considerable time to focus on your course work, but time to interact with fellow classmates and faculty outside the classroom is also necessary. Much of your learning will be informal and spontaneous and some of it will be vicarious as you observe the efforts and outcomes of other students in the program. Doctoral students are strongly encouraged to attend all HDFS public doctoral defenses of qualifying exams and dissertations when possible. Observing others is valuable as it familiarizes you with the process and it provides performance models with both strengths and limitations. Although much of the feedback you will receive from faculty and fellow students regarding your development will be informal and spontaneous, the department also has a formal evaluation process that will provide direct feedback to you on an annual basis. The goal of both formal and informal feedback is professional socialization.

The HDFS faculty want graduates of our program to be the best and most competitive new professionals on the job market. Our evaluations of your performance in this department, in classes and assistantships but also in the development of your scholarly specialization and in other aspects of your professional socialization, will be reflected in letters of reference, recommendations for awards, etc. We want you to be successful.

LINES OF AUTHORITY

There may be times when you have a concern regarding a course, some aspect of the doctoral program, doctoral requirements, your assistantship, or some other issue. For concerns regarding a course or assistantship, you should first discuss the concern with the faculty member who is teaching the course or supervising the assistantship. If the concern is not satisfactorily addressed, then you should bring the concern to the GPO or Department Head.

If the concern does not deal with a course or assistantship and the student does not know where to begin in order

to address the concern, it is recommended that students start with the GPO or Department Head. It is the department's policy that concerns are dealt with directly and by following established lines of authority.

ANNUAL EVALUATION

As a doctoral student, your progress in the doctoral program will be evaluated on an annual basis.

Steady Progress toward the Degree

There is so much to do as you prepare for your career that it is easy to lose track of time. Students must understand that their success in the program is defined fundamentally in terms of the progress they are making *toward the degree*. Progress involves completion of the core course work, electives, the MS thesis (if relevant to the student), the qualifying exam, and the dissertation, as well as the skill-building experiences recommended for students by the advisor and committee.

The Ph.D. is conceptualized as a 5-or-6-year degree program. This time frame assumes that the student will take the full doctoral core of course work including that which is in common with the MS degree. Therefore, the time frame applies not only to students who come to the program with a bachelors degree and intend to proceed all the way to the Ph.D., but also to those students who complete an MS degree elsewhere and come to Auburn to pursue the Ph.D. All doctoral graduates will complete the full core unless they can show transcript, text and syllabus that indicates the content of a graduate class taken elsewhere covers the content of a given class. The teaching faculty member decides whether the class content has been adequately addressed.

The 5-or-6 year time frame is important as a standard against which to measure a student's progress toward the degree. In order to accomplish the degree within this time frame, students must keep their sights on completing the intermediate steps required by the degree. If adequate progress is not made, the assistantship support available to the student will be curtailed. *Departmental assistantships and university fellowships are not available to students who are not making adequate progress toward the degree.* Inadequate progress may or may not result in expulsion from the program, but if not, financial support will be the responsibility of the student not advancing at pace. Students for whom assistantship support is important to the ability to pursue graduate education must ensure that they gage their progress.

Evaluation Process

Early in the Spring Semester, the GPO will direct you to complete a form outlining the progress you have made toward your degree goals. Also as part of this process you will declare your goals for the coming year in terms of research, teaching and outreach/service. There will also be an opportunity for you to identity longer-range goals and to engage in self-evaluation in the context of your program. Along with this form, you will submit an updated curriculum vita. Other supporting documents such as teaching evaluations, extension/outreach products, conference presentations, and published papers that were generated during the evaluation year should be submitted with the vita. Evaluations of your assistantship performance (submitted by your assistantship supervisor) are considered in the review as are comments from faculty who have had you in class and from faculty who have had other exposure to you as a student in the program.

The goal of the evaluation process is to assess each student's progress and to identify problems or concerns early so corrective action can occur. However, for students who are on track, suggestions of suitable opportunities may also be raised and outstanding student accomplishments are brought to the attention of the faculty through this process. Several students have been nominated for significant student awards as a result of the annual review.

Evaluation Outcomes

Students will receive one of three overall ratings from the review.

* **Satisfactory progress** indicates that faculty believe the student is progressing as expected or better.

- * **Concerns with progress** means the faculty have identified specific issues that must be addressed in the coming year. It is a warning. Students who receive a rating of "concerns" are only funded as TAs or RAs if their major professor is willing to provide funding for them or vouch for their progress the next year. Students for whom the faculty have concerns in consecutive years receive the rating "unsatisfactory" in the second year.
- * **Unsatisfactory progress** indicates the faculty believe previously identified concerns have not been adequately addressed and/or the student is seriously off track in the program. Students with this rating will not be eligible for assistantship support for the coming year. A student rated "unsatisfactory" in one year must attain a rating of "satisfactory" during the following year or he/she will be counseled out of the program.

Following the faculty meeting, your major professor will compile faculty comments in a letter and share it with you. The letter becomes a part of your permanent record in the program.

HDFS ASSISTANTSHIP POLICY

All assistantship funding in the Department of Human Development and Family Studies is contingent upon remaining in good standing in the program, which means that the student is making satisfactory progress toward the degree. Furthermore, all funding is dependent upon departmental need, the availability of funds, and the approval of the fiscal year budget by the Auburn University Board of Trustees.

Assistantship stipends are paid on different scales for M.S. versus Ph.D. students.

M.S. - Ph.D. Students

For students who originally entered the M.S. program and transitioned to the Ph.D. program, the pay scale remains at the M.S. level until the semester following the successful defense of the master's thesis.

Because third-year M.S. students tracking into the doctoral program are taking doctoral core courses while completing their thesis, they are not considered off track in the doctoral program as long as they have their thesis complete by the end of their third year in the program. A maximum of six years of departmental support (including any provided while an M.S. student in HDFS) are available to students whose annual reviews indicate that they have remained on track throughout their program.

Ph.D. Students

Students who joined the doctoral program with an M.S. degree from another program receive a stipend at the doctoral level of pay. Since they are required to take the full doctoral core unless they are able to transfer specific classes from their master's program, but do not have a thesis to complete, a maximum of 5 years of departmental support is available to students whose annual reviews indicate they have stayed on track.

GRADUATE ASSISTANT EVALUATION POLICY

Each semester you hold a graduate assistantship, you should expect to meet with the supervisor of the assistantship to discuss your duties and the advisor's expectations. You should also expect at least one meeting, typically at the end of the semester, during which your supervisor reviews your assistantship performance. Typical items in the evaluation include whether you were: timely in your performance of assistantship duties, thorough and thoughtful in your role, responsive to feedback, able to take the lead in appropriate times and ways, a team player in relation to the people you work with in your duties, and advancing in the development of the appropriate competencies related to the assistantship.

There is a separate evaluation form for each type of assistantship. You should expect to see your supervisor's evaluations and have the opportunity to discuss them in a meeting with her/him. These forms become part of your permanent record in the program and are also part of your annual evaluation. If you have concerns about your performance in an assistantship, you should approach your supervisor for feedback when your concerns arise rather than waiting until the end of the semester.

If you are a teaching assistant and the instructor of record for a class, the teacher evaluations completed by your class will also be part of your evaluation. They should be included with the material you provide for the annual review.

DOCTORAL COMPETENCIES

Not all doctoral students join the HDFS program with the same goals, so the competencies or skills that they hope to develop in the program are likely to vary to some degree. However, the HDFS program has some goals in common for all doctoral students. We want all doctoral graduates to have the ability to perform competently as teachers, researchers, and providers of professional service/outreach. Therefore, there are several competencies that each student should discuss with her/his major professor and committee. In addition to performing well in class, these are the types of things you will be asked to discuss in your annual evaluation as you plan and implement your program and professional goals.

Teaching

1. the ability to develop lectures and/or appropriate material for an entire course;
2. the ability to develop appropriate course material including course syllabi, homework assignments, tests, etc;
3. the ability to understand and implement academic honesty policies and procedures, and fair and ethical treatment of students; and
4. the ability to teach effectively.

Research (In addition to thesis or dissertation work)

2. the ability to conceptualize a research question and develop an appropriate research design;
3. the ability to collect data;
3. the ability to use statistical computer software packages independently to analyze data;
4. the ability to develop an analysis strategy and to interpret research data independently; and
5. the ability to prepare and submit a manuscript for publication.

Service

1. competence in providing service to children and/or families; and
2. professional service beyond membership in professional organizations.

THE DOCTORAL QUALIFYING (GENERAL/PRELIMINARY) EXAMINATION

Before doctoral students can be admitted to candidacy for the Ph.D. degree, they must pass the written and oral phases of the qualifying (or general or preliminary) examination. The qualifying exam process may begin early in the student's program but the qualifying exam cannot be defended until the student has completed all required (core) coursework in the doctoral program. Each doctoral student in HDFS takes a core of course work intended to provide breadth in the students understanding of our multi-disciplinary field and to integrate its many threads. In addition, a prominent aspect of doctoral education is the development of depth in a specialization area that will serve as the foundation of the student's professional career and contribution to the field. Both this breadth and depth occur as students pursue their course work and their varied assistantship, practicum, and independent learning experiences working with other students and professors in the department. The qualifying (general/preliminary) examination in HDFS represents an opportunity for students to demonstrate the breadth and depth of their knowledge in an independent fashion as they take the lead in producing one of three research products (described below) in collaboration with their major professor or another professor (with the approval of the major professor). This product then becomes the primary focus of the oral component of the qualifying exam. Only after both written and oral parts of the qualifying (general/preliminary) exam have been passed is a student admitted to candidacy for the Ph.D. degree. Students must be admitted to candidacy before having their dissertation proposal meeting.

The following is edited from the Graduate School's policy regarding the general oral exam:

A general examination, often called the “preliminary examination,” is required of all applicants for the degree of doctor of philosophy. It consists of written and oral testing by the student’s advisory committee (or by an examination committee designated by the student’s academic program) in the student’s major and minor. The written portion of the examination does not require approval in advance by the Graduate School. The oral portion, however, does require such approval. Arrangements for the oral examination must be made by application to the Graduate School at least one week in advance of the examination. The primary purpose of the general examination is to assess the student’s understanding of the broad body of knowledge in a field of study. The examination also affords the advisory committee an opportunity to review the student’s proposed research and understanding of research methods and literature in the chosen field. If the general examination reveals deficiencies in any of these areas, the advisory committee may recommend remedial work, re-examination, or discontinuation of doctoral study.

The general oral examination should be conducted immediately after the successful completion of the written examination and well before the final examination. At least one complete semester must intervene between the general oral and final examinations. The two examinations thus cannot be taken either in the same semester or in consecutive semesters. Successful completion of the oral examination requires unanimous support of the student’s advisory committee. If the general oral examination is failed, a re-examination may be given on recommendation of the committee and approval by the Dean of the Graduate School. Further examinations require exceptional circumstances and approval by the Graduate Council.

The student becomes a candidate for the degree on successful completion of the general examination.

Guidelines for the Qualifying (General/Preliminary) Exam

The qualifying exam serves as an assessment of the student’s developing research competencies and involves generating one of the following scholarly products: a critical review paper of publication quality, an empirical paper of publication quality (that is not the master’s thesis), or a grant proposal of sufficient quality to submit for funding. Students are encouraged to submit the scholarly product for publication in a peer-reviewed journal or to a funding agency; however, submission is not required as part of the qualifying exam process. The target journal or funding mechanism should be appropriate for a new professional in the field and should be specified for the committee by the student when the written proposal is submitted. More than one possible journal or funding mechanism may be specified.

The student’s choice of research topic and research product should be considered in close consultation with the major professor and should represent the student’s area of specialization. The scholarly product should also be consistent with the student’s career goals. For example, the product may address basic or applied research topics and may present implications for future research, practice, or policy. Grant proposals may be written for submission to a public or private research agency or to a service foundation.

After choosing a research topic and product in close consultation with the major professor, the student completes the written proposal, written exam, and oral exam, each described below.

Written proposal

The written proposal serves as a research proposal as well as an initial assessment of the student’s research competencies. It allows the advisory committee to identify strengths and areas that may require further development in the student’s doctoral training and to provide recommendations about the written exam.

The written proposal challenges the student to think and write independently, though reflective guidance from the major professor is encouraged. In other words, at this stage of the qualifying exam process, the student generates ideas (e.g., about theoretical frameworks, hypotheses, measures, planned analyses), and the major professor helps the student understand the strengths and limitations of the ideas. The major professor also provides feedback about the content and style of writing, but the student writes the entire proposal.

The written proposal introduces the topic and its significance, identifies the key theories and studies, and outlines the innovations and questions or hypotheses of the proposal or paper. This introductory section should span approximately the same number of pages as the Introduction section of a standard journal publication (i.e., 5-10 pages). In addition, unless the student proposes a critical review paper, the written proposal includes a standard Method or Approach section with appropriate sub-sections (e.g., participants, procedures, measures, and planned analyses).

Upon completion of the written proposal, the student arranges a meeting with the advisory committee and submits the written proposal to the advisory committee at least one week before the meeting. The student begins the meeting with a brief presentation of the proposal (e.g., 10-15 minutes), followed by a period during which the advisory committee asks questions and provides recommendations for the written exam. Within one week following the proposal meeting, the student should write a brief summary of the discussion with an emphasis on decisions or modifications to the original proposal and email the summary to the committee for their records and reference when reviewing the full written exam.

Written exam

Preparing the written exam is an important learning and professional development experience. The written exam serves as a research product as well as a reflection of the student's research competencies. Along with the oral exam, the written exam helps the advisory committee determine the student's readiness for advancement to doctoral candidacy and the dissertation.

As compared to the written proposal, the major professor may play a more active role in the development of the written exam (e.g., flesh out the approved study plan, assist with troubleshooting analyses, and assist with processing discussion points), though it remains essential that the student produces the written exam in the lead role. Providing feedback through verbal or written comments is preferred over text editing and writing. Given the opportunity for increased input from the major professor, the benefit of feedback from the advisory committee and other colleagues, and additional time for independent learning and skill-building, the written exam should demonstrate progress in the student's thinking and writing beyond the written proposal.

In addition to the scholarly product of choice, the written exam may be accompanied by a memo explaining any revisions to the full written product that deviate significantly from the approved proposal.

Upon completion of the written exam, the student submits the written exam to the advisory committee and tentatively schedules the oral exam with the advisory committee no less than three weeks from the submission of the written exam. The advisory committee is required to review the written exam within two weeks. Possible outcomes of the committee review include: accept without revision or with minor revisions (which requires unanimous agreement) or major revisions required. The student is not permitted to proceed to the oral exam unless every member of the advisory committee accepts the written exam without revision or with minor revisions. Major revisions must be specified clearly by committee members through feedback about limitations as well as recommendations about how the exam could be improved. The student should prepare a revision for the committee following the assessment by even one advisory committee member that major revisions are required. Up to two rounds of revision and committee review are possible. Each revision should be accompanied by a detailed response memo that lists each committee member's questions and suggestions and an explanation about how they were addressed. If two rounds of revisions do not yield a product that is considered acceptable without revision or with minor revisions by all committee members, the written exam is considered failed and the student's graduate program is concluded.

The General Oral Exam (defense of the written exam)

The oral defense of the written exam occurs within one month of receiving an acceptable outcome on the written exam. **The Graduate School requires the student to submit an application for the exam at least one week in advance to schedule the oral exam.** Thus, the oral exam should be scheduled with the advisory committee no less

than three weeks from the submission of the written exam to the advisory committee, allowing sufficient time for the student to submit the application for the oral exam to the Graduate School (if the written exam is accepted by the advisory committee) or to reschedule the oral exam with the advisory committee (if the advisory committee requires revisions to the written exam before proceeding to the oral exam). The time and place of the oral exam, as well as the members of the advisory/examination committee, are identified on the application form. The application is available at the following url:

<https://fp.auburn.edu/gradschl/alpha/forms/Login.aspx?ReturnUrl=%2fgradschl%2falphabet%2fforms%2fform-a.aspx>

When the time and location of the defense is finalized (i.e., scheduled through the Graduate School), the major professor should announce the defense to HDFS faculty and graduate students. Students preparing for the oral exam are strongly encouraged to consult with their major professor, their committee members, or any other relevant resource.

The general oral exam has two phases. First is an approximately 45-minute, professional-level presentation of the written exam to the HDFS faculty and graduate student body. This presentation is followed by a question and answer period during which the student fields questions from the audience about the presentation. Approximately 1 hour should be allocated for the presentation and Q-A session. The audience is then dismissed and the second part of the exam proceeds. (Note, however, that Graduate School policy authorizes any graduate faculty member to attend the second part of the defense.) Although the second part of the oral exam typically continues to address the written exam, any aspect of the student's specialization or any area of the Ph.D. core or program is legitimate examination material. The purpose of the oral examination is not simply to assess the student's knowledge base, but also to test the student's capacity to think extemporaneously.

At the end of the meeting, the student is typically asked to leave the room for a few minutes while the committee discusses the student's performance and considers their votes. The votes are 'pass' or 'fail'. To pass the exam, the committee vote must support passing unanimously. Before the meeting is ended, the committee must sign and document the outcome of the exam on Form C 'Report on the General Oral Examination'. This form is received by the major professor from the Graduate School prior to the defense. The Graduate School should be given the original of the form with the signatures of the committee indicating the outcome of the exam, and the student should also save a copy and provide a copy of the signed form to the GPO. Although there is no official notice, students who have passed the general oral examination can change their designation from 'doctoral student' to 'doctoral candidate'.

In the event of a failure of the general oral exam, students are allowed one retake. Before a failed oral exam ends, the committee's expectations for the student's performance in a retake and their recommendation for the time frame should be clearly specified. One (and only one) retake of the oral exam is permitted and the student should have a minimum of 4 weeks to prepare for it. When the time and place for the retake are defined, the student must reapply to the Graduate School for the exam. Only the student and committee reconvene for the retake. The committee should specify at the end of the first oral exam whether a presentation will be part of the second oral defense.

A second failure of the oral exam results in dismissal from the program.

DISSERTATION AND PROPOSAL GUIDE

Timing of the Dissertation Proposal Meeting

You must pass the General Oral Examination before having a dissertation proposal meeting.

Guidelines for Working with Your Committee

The HDFS Graduate Advisory Committee has developed the following guidelines to help you in the preparation of your proposal and dissertation.

The purpose of a dissertation is to help you further develop skills in all aspects of the research process, which may include conceptualizing a research question, developing a research design, collecting data, coding and analyzing data, and interpreting results. The dissertation provides a structure through which these skills may be furthered. Your committee, therefore, will expect you to demonstrate skill in each of these areas. It is the prerogative of the committee to question you regarding any or all of these skills.

You should seek advice from each member of your advisory committee when preparing and when writing your dissertation proposal. Each committee member should receive a draft of your proposal at least one week before the meeting with your doctoral advisory committee at which you discuss and defend your proposal. Different committees may need more time and it is their prerogative to request it.

As you proceed through the process of completing the dissertation, it is your responsibility to check in the Graduate School Bulletin for the graduate school deadlines. The format check deadline usually is quite early in the semester. The deadline for turning in final copies of the dissertation is usually about mid-semester for students intending to defend their dissertation and graduate in the same semester.

Requirements for a Proposal

A dissertation proposal is the plan of action that results in a final dissertation. As such, the Introduction and the Review of Literature will remain largely the same from proposal to dissertation. In most cases, the Method section will be changed only by conversion from future to past tense. Thus, the proposal is not a draft of something that will be polished up later. You should understand, however, that many dissertations confront unanticipated problems that necessitate making changes to the proposal before the final draft of the dissertation is submitted.

You should consider the proposal defensible (i.e., ready for an examination meeting with the advisory committee) only when the Introduction, Literature Review, Method, References, and appropriate Appendices have reached a finalized stage in the judgment of your major professor.

All research in which human subjects are used must be approved in advance by the Institutional Review Board for the Use of Human Subjects in Research (IRB.). Department Heads must approve protocols before they are forwarded to the IRB.

Elements of a Dissertation

The APA Publication Manual provides guidance for all of the sections that will appear in a dissertation with the exception of the Review of the Literature and Proposed Analysis sections (or see <http://www.apastyle.org> for the same information). In the following paragraphs, we provide a brief description of elements of a typical dissertation and note some of the ways in which the AU Thesis guidelines differ from APA practice. Please use the APA Manual or <http://www.apastyle.org> and the AU Guide to Preparation and Submission of Theses and Dissertations http://www.grad.auburn.edu/cs/thesis_guide.html throughout preparation of your document.

A dissertation normally consists of:

Prefatory Material: This material given in the opening pages of the dissertation is stipulated by the Auburn University Thesis and Dissertation Guide (certificate of approval, title page, table of contents, etc.)

Introduction: The Introduction is a brief statement of the question and an overview of the logic for the development of the question (including supporting literature). It may help to think of the Introduction as a section that could (with little editing) become the introduction to a published article. Specific hypotheses may be presented in the Introduction, or may be held for the Literature Review section (a decision you should reach with your major professor).

Review of the Literature: The Review of the Literature is an extensive review of extant literature on all topics

directly related to your dissertation question (e.g., theoretical and empirical background, a discussion of conceptual issues related to measures, any critique of previous literatures and/or methodologies). The Literature Review should build logically to a statement of the specific research hypotheses or questions that will guide the analytic strategy for your study.

Method: The Method section is organized by subheadings that provide information about the following topics: Participants, Procedure, Measures, and Proposed Analysis. A thorough description of participants in your study is presented in the Participants section. This description includes all attributes of the sample that will be relevant to the analysis (e.g., gender and racial composition, age, socioeconomic status of subjects) but also relevant attributes of subjects that may not be included as variables in the analysis (e.g., region of country where subjects reside, number of subjects contacted to participate, number refusing). The Procedure details the steps undertaken to collect the data that you will analyze. The purpose of the Procedure is to permit a critical review of your data collection strategy and to provide enough information for others to replicate your study. The Measures section includes information about how each variable to be included in the analysis is measured. Estimates of reliability and validity for all measures are important pieces of information and should be included for each variable where relevant. Where possible, these estimates should be based in the data collected for your study. Furthermore, since many studies use previously existing measures for some or all variables in the analysis, published reports of the reliability and validity of these measures based in previous research is also legitimate and important information. The Proposed Analysis specifies each step in the analysis that will be used to answer the questions or hypotheses put forward by the study. The presentation of these analyses, therefore, should link directly to the research questions or hypotheses.

Results: At a minimum, the Results section is a presentation of the outcome of all the proposed analysis. It may be organized (a) by research questions or hypotheses, (b) by issue or content area, or (c) some other logical criterion. Usually, the planned analysis raises other interesting questions, and thus, the Results section will often contain analysis beyond those originally planned.

Discussion: The Discussion is a brief presentation of each finding or group of findings together with explanations and alternative explanations of their meaning. The Discussion should be related to the Introduction by connecting the findings with the driving issues that originally sparked the project. Furthermore, implications, limitations, and caveats of the results should be considered. It would not be unusual, particularly when dealing with alternative explanations, to present limited additional data analysis in the Discussion.

References: Students should use APA guidelines for listing references.

Footnotes: According to the Graduate School, footnotes may be placed at the bottom of the relevant page or the end of the section in which the footnote appears.

Tables and Figures: Tables and figures are integrated into the text near their first citation for AU dissertations and theses. See AU Dissertation Guide and APA for guidance on Table and Figure construction.

Appendices: Any pertinent material (e.g., informed consent letter, copies of questionnaires or surveys, interview protocol, observational coding forms, additional analyses not presented in Results) should be contained within separate appendices identified alphabetically at the end of the thesis/dissertation.

Multi-Study Dissertation Option. A multi-study (multi-publication) dissertation is an alternative to the single-study dissertation. In addition to the prefatory material described above and standard-length sections of a scientific article (Abstract, Introduction, Method, Results, Discussion, References, Tables and Figures), the multi-study dissertation requires General Introduction and General Discussion sections that situate the dissertation studies within an overarching topic area and explain how the studies separately and jointly advance knowledge on the overarching topic. The General Introduction and General Discussion sections span approximately the same number of pages as standard Introduction or Discussion sections of scientific articles (i.e., 5-10 pages). Typical journal space guidelines limit the extensiveness (breadth) of the literature reviews in the multi-study dissertation,

but this option raises the challenge of integrating the dissertation studies. A paper that is published between the dissertation proposal and the dissertation defense is permissible as part of the multi-study dissertation as long as the paper is student-led and the research plan for the published paper was proposed and approved as part of the dissertation proposal process.

The dissertation may be accompanied by a memo explaining any revisions that deviate significantly from the proposal.

Final Examination (Dissertation Defense)

After a draft of your dissertation has been completed and approved by your advisory committee, it is submitted to the graduate school. The representative of the graduate school (the university reader) then reviews the dissertation. This review process adds several weeks to the timetable for dissertation completion and should be taken into account as students plan their final semester. (It is common, but not required, for the university reader to be recruited by the student and/or major professor well in advance of the completion of the dissertation. Identifying the university reader in advance can reduce the time between your committees acknowledgment of the readiness of your dissertation to be defended and your actual defense by a couple of weeks.) When the university reader has approved the dissertation, you will apply for the final examination on Form X, supplied by the graduate school to the major professor. The form should be filed at least one week prior to the planned meeting.

Like the oral defense of your general written exam, your final examination will involve a public presentation of your dissertation followed by a meeting of your committee (although, university policy dictates that any graduate faculty member may attend). So select a time when all members of your examination committee can allocate a 2.5 hour block. When the time and location of the defense is scheduled, your major professor will announce the meeting to HDFS faculty and graduate students. The exam will begin with a professional-level presentation of the dissertation to the HDFS faculty and graduate student body. This presentation (approximately 50 minutes) is followed by a question and answer period (approximately 10 minutes) during which you field questions from the audience about your study. The audience is then dismissed and the second part of the exam proceeds. This second part of the exam usually focuses on your dissertation study, but any aspect of your major or minor area is legitimate examination material.

The representative of the graduate school (the university reader) also attends the defense and participates, but does not vote on your performance or sign your dissertation cover sheets. Only oral examinations receiving unanimous approval of the committee are successful.

If the final examination is failed, a re-examination may be given on recommendation of the advisory committee and approval by the Dean of the Graduate School.

In addition to successful completion of all examinations, the signature forms must be returned to the Graduate School (with copies to the GPO) and final copies of the dissertation must be uploaded (i.e., published) to the Auburn University Electronic Thesis and Dissertation website (AUETD) before the degree is conferred.