

# 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.

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## **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 researching 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.

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## **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 February 1 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***

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.

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## 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 application 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 website. 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 faculty members 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.

***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 your 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.

Courses may be transferred in for the introductory methods sequence if these same courses were either a) taken at Boise State or b) approved by the program director.

***Do I have to take the GRE?***

Students who have a master's degree from an accredited program 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 a small number of 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 federal agencies 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.

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## INFORMATION ON COURSEWORK

According to the Boise State Graduate Catalog, “The program of study leading to a Ph.D. degree must satisfy the following minimum credit requirements: 66 total, at least half of which need to be earned in courses exclusive of dissertation. All credit applied to meet the credit requirements must be graduate academic credit except that a limited number of credits earned in undergraduate courses outside the major field of study are allowed (see Restrictions on Certain Courses). In all cases, at least two thirds of the total credit requirement must be earned at Boise State University after admission to the program. All credit must be approved for application by the supervisory committee.”

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 PUBADM 501, 503 or 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 two thirds 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 credits). 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."

### **Additional restrictions regarding undergraduate courses**

While official graduate college policy allows for the transfer of undergraduate courses to meet the PhD requirement, the PhD program in Public Policy and Administration has a more stringent policy. The PhD program does not accept undergraduate courses for credit. In extraordinary circumstances, a student's advisor and the program director may approve an undergraduate course to apply for credit, but would require additional work in the course to make it substantially more intensive than the standard undergraduate course.

### ***Course Planning***

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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 reasonable 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 defending one's dissertation proposal. 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. Student 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. If the student does not meet consecutive semester or overall 3.0 GPA requirement, the student may appeal for reinstatement through PPA and then through the Graduate Dean.

### ***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 or from another degree program at Boise State University according to the following guidelines: (1) grades must be "A" or "B"; (2) credits applied to meet requirements of a previously earned degree or certificate of any type at another institution are not eligible, except for a Master's degree or certificate; undergraduate credits are not accepted for credit; (3) the credits were earned no less than **seven** years prior to the student's first semester in the PhD program. For those entering the program with post baccalaureate graduate coursework, no more than 21 credits of previous graduate coursework can be applied as course credit. 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.

### ***Plagiarism Statement***

Plagiarism by any PhD student or candidate, on any work, including, but not limited to, course assignments, comprehensive exams, dissertation proposal work, or the dissertation, is unacceptable. Students found to have engaged in plagiarism will be reported to the Dean of Students and dismissed from the program on their first offense, and will have their GA position terminated (if applicable).

Cases of plagiarism will be referred to the program director by the faculty member who suspects plagiarism. The program director will, in consultation with the program committee, make a determination as to whether or not the student committed plagiarism. Any appeals of these decisions must be made under current Boise State and Graduate College policy.

The Boise State student code of conduct provides the following definition of plagiarism:

“Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use or incorporation, without specific or proper acknowledgment or citation, of ideas, data, or language of another person’s work in, or as the basis for, one’s own work that is offered for academic consideration, credit, or public presentation or as part of an application for admission to the University or a University Program. Lack of knowledge of proper citation is not a valid excuse for plagiarism. It is the responsibility of the student writing the material to know the proper methods for appropriate citation and/or to seek guidance/help when attempting to learn the proper methods for citation or use another’s work so that proper attribution is given to the other person. Plagiarism can be committed in any type of academic exercise by representing as one’s own, without proper attribution, another individual’s words, phrases, ideas, sequence of ideas, information or any other mode, or content of expression. Examples of plagiarism include but are not limited to any of the following behaviors if full, clear, and proper acknowledgement of the original source is not included:

- a. The copying of another person’s work, published or unpublished;
- b. The paraphrase or summary of another person’s work, published or unpublished;
- c. Using another person’s ideas, arguments, and/or thesis from a published or unpublished work;
- d. Using another person’s research from a published or unpublished work;
- e. Using materials prepared by a person or agency engaged in the selling of papers or other academic materials;”

### *Dual Submissions*

Under no circumstances are students allowed to submit the same assignment for multiple courses. Students may, and are encouraged to, conduct work on similar topics for their course assignments, but each assignment must be sufficiently different. If students are in doubt about whether work for different classes is sufficiently different, they should contact the instructor of both courses for guidance. Whether assignments are sufficiently different from another is at the discretion of the instructor(s).

If a student is found to have submitted the same assignment to multiple classes, this conduct will be referred to the program director and the program committee. A first offense of this policy is punishable up to, and including, dismissal from the program and termination of the student's GA position (if applicable).

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## **RESIDENCY REQUIREMENT**

According to Boise State's Graduate Catalog, a Ph.D. student must spend at least one academic year in full-time, on-campus graduate study at Boise State University. Every Ph.D. student must fulfill this residency requirement or fulfill a substitute requirement or plan that is approved by the Graduate Council for the program in which the student is enrolled.

Given that a majority of students enrolled in the PPA PhD are part-time students, the program has adopted an Alternative Residency Plan (ARP) for those students to meet their residency requirements.

### ***Alternative Residency Plan Form***

The Boise State graduate catalog requires PhD students to fulfill a one-year full-time residency. Students wishing to fulfill their residency requirement via an Alternative Residency Plan (ARP) must complete this form and submit it with the Application for Advancement to Candidacy (AAC) form following the successful defense of their dissertation proposal.

The graduate college recommends that alternative residency plans should meet the following four goals:

#### **1. Disciplinary depth and breadth**

- Access to a wide variety of classes and academic experiences in the student's field and in related disciplines.
- Access to library, information technology, and laboratory resources.
- Quality and rigor of the program through involvement with and scrutiny by peers in other disciplines.

#### **2. Scholarly immersion**

- Development of the student's capacity to make significant original contributions to knowledge in a context of freedom of inquiry and expression (e.g., individual and group research training, assisting with developing applications for external funding, participation at scholarly conferences, publications or other forms of scholarly dissemination).
- Ability to understand and critically evaluate the literature of the field and to apply appropriate principles and procedures to the recognition, evaluation, interpretation and understanding of issues and problems at the frontiers of knowledge.

### **3. Professional socialization**

- Substantial interaction with a large pool of faculty to obtain scholarly and disciplinary advice, perspective, and guidance.
- Interaction with fellow graduate students on professional issues.
- Provision of a broad range of professional development experiences to guard against over-specialization.
- Access to a wide spectrum of seminars, professional presentations, and contact with leaders in their own discipline as well as others.

### **4. Professional practice**

- Awareness of and commitment to the ethical and regulatory principles and practices appropriate to the field.

Using the form below, list the activities you have undertaken during your time in the PhD program in PPA at Boise State, including their dates, a brief description of the activity, and how it fulfills one or more of the four goals above.

The form below should be filled out electronically—feel free to provide as much information as is necessary to demonstrate that you have filled the ARP goals.

**Students should plan to attend or participate in a minimum of three (3) of these events or opportunities per semester of enrollment.**



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## **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, up to 6 semesters, if they are making satisfactory progress toward degree requirements and if PPA has sufficient funding for the position.

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## **ADVISING**

### ***Procedural Advisor***

Upon admission to the program, the program coordinator will assign a temporary academic advisor to each student in order to advise on initial course work. After taking coursework for a year or so, the advisor and/or Program Director will work with the doctoral student to identify a Supervisory Committee Chair with expertise in the student's emphasis area. From that time on, the Chair of the Supervisory Committee serves as the student's principal advisor, and will guide the student through remaining coursework, the comprehensive exams, and the dissertation.

### ***Supervisory Committee***

The major advisor (Supervisory Chair) is the primary mentor for the student and must be a member of the graduate faculty of Boise State with an endorsement to chair a supervisory committee from the Graduate College. The chair must have an appointment in the School of Public Service.

The supervisory committee for students in the PhD program in PPA is composed of members of the Graduate Faculty who are appointed by the Graduate College and charged with the guidance of a student admitted to a specific graduate degree program. The committee consists of a major advisor who serves as Supervisory Chair plus at least two (2) but no more than four (4) additional members who are chosen to provide a broad range of knowledge and expertise to the student.

When assembling a supervisory committee, students should choose faculty members who will best be able to guide them successfully through the comprehensive exam, dissertation proposal, dissertation writing, and dissertation defense processes in Public Policy and Administration. Following Graduate College policy, a majority of the committee members must hold appointments in the academic unit(s) responsible for the program, which for PPA is the School of Public Service. Furthermore, each supervisory committee must feature at least one faculty member with expertise in Public Policy and Administration (i.e., either teaches or has taught in the MPA or PPA curriculum, or has disciplinary expertise or training in this area).

For the purposes of forming dissertation committees, faculty considered to be PPA faculty will be the current Program Director and all faculty and faculty emeriti with a primary or secondary appointment in Public Policy and Administration. If you are in doubt whether a faculty member is PPA faculty, you should contact the program director.

All committees and Chairships will need to be approved by the Program Director and the Graduate College through the Supervisory Committee Form, as required by the Graduate College.

In some circumstances, it may benefit a student to have a supervisory committee member who is external to Boise State. In these instances, the student should obtain approval for the outside member's appointment from their supervisory chair, and contact the program director. The outside member must be appointed as adjunct graduate faculty in the Boise State Graduate College, an application that the program director must submit. The student and outside faculty member will work with the program director to obtain this approval.

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## **COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION**

According to the Boise State Graduate Catalog, “A Ph.D. student must pass a comprehensive examination that assesses 1) depth and breadth of knowledge in the major field of study and in one or more related disciplines and 2) readiness to undertake dissertation research.”

The catalog continues, “Considerable autonomy is granted to the academic unit in the design, administration, and evaluation of the doctoral comprehensive examination for a Ph.D. student. However, the student must be in regular status and registered for at least one credit of 691 Doctoral Comprehensive Examination during the semester or term of the first attempt at the comprehensive examination, and the examination must be administered in time to process and submit the grade when grade reports are due in the Office of the Registrar. If the student passes the comprehensive examination, a grade of pass (P) is submitted for the 691 credit(s). If the student fails the comprehensive examination, then the academic unit responsible for the program follows the procedure described in Failure of the Comprehensive Examination (below). “

Doctoral students are eligible to sit for their comprehensive examination after having completed their coursework, but must complete the exam prior to completing 48 credits exclusive of PUBADM 693.

Beyond superior effort in coursework, students seeking the distinction of Doctor of Philosophy in Public Policy and Administration must successfully complete three tiers 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.

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***

The examination will take place during the first week of October for fall semesters and the first week of March for spring semesters. 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 soon 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.

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## DISSERTATION PROPOSAL

According to Boise State's Graduate Catalog, "A Ph.D. student must prepare a dissertation written in clear and effective English that embodies the results of his or her original scholarly research. A dissertation proposal must be approved in advance of the dissertation research by the supervisory committee. The dissertation proposal presents the background, objectives, scope, methods and time lines of the dissertation research. Substantive work done by the student prior to the appointment of the supervisory committee or work represented by credit other than 693 Dissertation (such as 596 Independent Study and 696 Directed Research) is not acceptable for the dissertation under any conditions."

### *Registration for Dissertation Credit*

The catalog continues, "A Ph.D. student must register for at least one credit of 693 Dissertation in any semester or session in which the student is engaged in dissertation activity, including the semester or session of the final oral examination, regardless of the number of 693 Dissertation credits already accumulated by the student.

The dissertation entails original research conducted by the student at the doctoral level in a manner that meets rigorous peer-reviewed standards. The dissertation proposal should be prepared and presented within a year of the student's successful comprehensive examination, but before substantive advanced coursework or research in the student's dissertation area commences. After the student submits a formal dissertation proposal to the Supervisory Committee, then upon review and approval of that proposal, the Supervisory Committee authorizes the student to schedule a formal oral presentation."

### *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: \_\_\_\_\_

Title of Project: \_\_\_\_\_

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

<b>Timeline</b>	Contains clearly presented timeline for accomplishing project goals; schedule is feasible			
<b>Remarks on presentation</b>	Cogent oral presentation			
	Concise presentation			
	Committee questions responded to in an appropriate manner			
	Criticisms handled appropriately			
	Written presentation is effective and well written			

**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) and Alternative Residency Plan (ARP) forms (if part-time).

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## DISSERTATION REQUIREMENTS

According to Boise State's Graduate Catalog, "The Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) degree is the most advanced research degree awarded by the University. It requires demonstration of expertise in a major field of study, a working understanding of one or more related disciplines, independent research leading to a significant and original contribution to knowledge, and (in some cases) proficiency in one or more foreign languages. Recipients of the Ph.D. degree generally engage in careers of active scholarship in a wide variety of employment settings."

"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."

### *Registration for Dissertation Credit*

The catalog continues: "A Ph.D. student must register for at least one credit of 693 Dissertation in any semester or session in which the student is engaged in dissertation activity, including the semester or session of the final oral examination, regardless of the number of 693 Dissertation credits already accumulated by the student. The student cannot undertake the final oral examination unless enough 693 Dissertation credit has been accumulated to meet the degree requirement for such credit. The student is not required to register for 693 Dissertation credit in the semester or session subsequent to the semester or session in which the Graduate College receives the format review copy of the dissertation and the Final Reading Approval pages signed by the chair of the supervisory committee (or designee). The student must submit the format review copy and the signed Final Reading Approval pages to the Graduate College no later than the last day of the final exam week of the semester or session. Failure to meet this deadline will require the student to register for at least one credit of 693 Dissertation in the subsequent semester or session."

### *Dissertation Grading*

"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*

It is important for the student to keep in mind that a grade of pass (P) in all 693 credits is not sufficient to satisfy the dissertation requirement for a Ph.D. degree and does not clear a student for graduation. A dissertation that has been successfully

defended by the student at the final oral examination must also be granted final reading approval by the major advisor (chair of the supervisory committee), and must pass the format review of the Graduate College. The dissertation in final form must also be approved by the Dean of the Graduate College, and because the dissertation is expected to be available to other scholars and to the general public, the entire dissertation must be archived and made publicly accessible. Please refer to Theses and Dissertations in the Graduate Academic Regulations section of this catalog.”

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 be 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 into the schedule.

<b>DRAFT SCHEDULE FOR SSL DISSERTATION*</b>							
<i>Revised 9/14/16</i>							
	SSL	JS	Advisor Meetings	SSL to BSU Members	BSU Members	Outside Members	Grad College Deadlines
<b>Week 1</b> 8/29	Coding Schema**						
<b>Week 2</b> 9/5	Circulate AAC		Reframe Chapters				
<b>Week 3</b> 9/12							
<b>Week 4</b> 9/19	Chpt. 2						
<b>Week 5</b> 9/26							
<b>Week 6</b> 10/3		Return Chpt. 2	Check-In Meeting	Chpt. 2			AAC Due 10/7
<b>Week 7</b> 10/10							
<b>Week 8</b> 10/17	Chpt. 3				Return Chpt. 2		
<b>Week 9</b> 10/24		Return Chpt. 3	Check-In Meeting	Chpt. 3			
<b>Week 10</b> 10/31							
<b>Week 11</b> 11/7					Return Chpt. 3		
<b>Week 12</b> 11/14	Chpt. 4						
<b>Week 13</b> 11/21	THANKSGIVING						
<b>Week 14</b> 11/28		Return Chpt. 4	Check-In Meeting	Chpt. 4			
<b>Week 15</b> 12/5	Chpt. 5						
<b>Week 16</b> 12/12	Chpt. 1				Return Chpt. 4	Review Draft	
<b>WINTER BREAK</b>	Apply for						

	May Grad and Begin Formatting						
Week 17 1/9	Revised Draft to Outside Members	Chpt. 1 and Chpt. 5	Check-In Meeting	Chpt. 1 and Chpt. 5			Apply for May Grad 1/13
Week 18 1/16	Notice of Defense to Grad College						
Week 19 1/23	Formatting / Front and Back Matter				Return Chpt. 1 and Chpt. 5	Return Draft 1/27	
Week 20 1/30			Check-In Meeting				
Week 21 2/6	Revised Draft						
Week 22 2/13	Defense						
Week 23 2/20							
Week 24 2/27							
Week 25 3/6	Submit to Grad College						
Week 26 3/13							Last Day to Submit Approved Dissertation 3/17
<b>*List of Chapters</b> 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).”

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### **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.

### **Dissertation Defense Checklist**

Please note that [extended information and instructions](#) are available on the Graduate College website.

**1. Scheduling:** Supervisory Chairs, committees, and PhD candidates should consult the graduate catalog and academic calendar at the beginning of the semester.

According to the graduate catalog, *“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.”*

At this time, the Supervisory Chair should submit a [“Graduate Defense Notification Form”](#) to the Graduate College. This is an electronic form that provides the "official" notice of the defense to the Grad College.

**2. Location:** Supervisory Chairs should work with the Program Assistant to secure a room large enough to host a public audience. Arrangements for any audio-visual needs (such as a screen, projector, laptop, etc.) should also be made. The Program Assistant will work with the Program Director to provide light refreshments for attendees. The graduate college recommends reserving a room for 2.5 hours, though many defenses will only last for approximately 90 minutes.

**3. Defense format:** According to the graduate catalog,

*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.*

A good rule of thumb is to plan for the student to present for approximately 30-45 minutes; for the public question and answer session to last for approximately 30 minutes; and for the private question and answer session to last for approximately 30 minutes. The Graduate Faculty Representative (GFR; see below) will be responsible for ensuring this process moves along in a timely and appropriate manner.

**4. Publicizing the defense:** The defense should be announced at least 2 weeks in advance. The Program Assistant and Program Director are responsible for making sure the defense is properly publicized. One common way to do this is to post written announcements in places where students and faculty are likely to see them. The Program Assistant can assist with preparing flyers to be posted in the ERB and elsewhere.

An email announcement should be sent to the PhD-in-PPA listserv, and the SPS Dean’s office should be notified of the defense so that SPS faculty and students may also be invited.

**4. Graduate Faculty Representative (GFR):** According to the graduate catalog, *“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.”*

The Graduate College will arrange for a GFR to be trained and present at the defense. The GFR will be given the appropriate forms that need to be filled out and signed by the committee, and will deliver the appropriate forms to the Graduate College.

**5. Grading:** According to the graduate catalog, *“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 [PPA does not require a unanimous vote]. 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.”*

Detailed instructions for how to handle failing grades are available [here](#).

### **Oral Presentation Checklist**

PhD in Public Policy and Administration, Boise State University

The checklist below may be used by students and their committees to prepare for the public portion of the dissertation defense.

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Defense Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Title of Project: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Format**

- Oral presentation is 30-40 minutes in length (followed by 20-30 minute public Q&A)
- A “dry run” of the presentation was completed for the Supervisory Chair and/or the Supervisory Committee
- Hard copies of the dissertation are provided to committee members who request them

### **Introduction**

- Title slide
- Welcome
- Acknowledgments: Committee, family, funding sources, etc.
- Clear statement of project topic
- Clear argument for significance of project topic
- Articulates research question

### **Literature Review and Theoretical Framework**

- Not overly bogged down in summary, but clear indication of academic “conversation(s)” relevant to study
- Slides include parenthetical citations of relevant work (full bibliographic information can appear at end of presentation as a supplemental slide)
- Key terms or concepts are identified and defined
- Identifies gap in the literature that project fills

### **Methods**

- Qualitative, quantitative, mixed? Why?
- Indicates whether IRB approval was obtained
- Explains sampling strategy
- Brief review of instruments and/or approaches to data collection
- Explanation of how data was analyzed
- Slides include parenthetical references supporting methodological choices
- Slides contain easy-to-digest visuals and figures (extra information can appear at the end as supplemental slides)

### **Results**

- Clearly describes results of study
- Aids audience in determining which results had significance and which didn't
- May also address weaknesses in data collection/analysis

### **Discussion**

- Offers interpretation of the results
- Connects back to the research question

- Reflects on implications for theory, knowledge-building, existing literature and theoretical frameworks, etc.
- Proposes areas of future research