Ph. D. Policies

Last Update: August 24, 2014
Ph.D. in Instructional Technology and Design

Initial Advising

- When a PhD student enters the program, he/she will arbitrarily be assigned an advisor.
  - Assignments will be made in an attempt to keep an even balance between the number of advisees.
    - Master degree advisees will be considered in these numbers.
  - The advisor in conjunction with the student will develop and submit an initial plan of study.
    - The initial plan of study must be submitted to the Graduate School by the second semester of enrollment.
- All graduate students must complete the “Responsible Conduct of Research” training modules required by the Graduate School during their first semester of enrollment.

Establishing the Doctoral Committee

- Within the first 18 hours of the program, the student will select a permanent advisor and begin working with that advisor to establish a program committee.
  - The permanent advisor may or may not be the same individual that served as the student’s initial advisor.
  - All members of the program committee should be established within the first 30 hours of the program.
  - The program committee in conjunction with the student will finalize the student’s plan of study.
    - If modified from the initial program of study, the revised plan of study will be resubmitted to the Graduate School.
    - Any subsequent changes to this final plan of study will require the approval and signature of all program committee members and must be resubmitted to the Graduate School.
  - The program committee will have a minimum of 4 members.
    - A minimum of four members, all of which must have Level II status to serve on doctoral committees.
    - The major professor must have doctoral directive status (Level III) in Instructional Technology and Design.
    - At least two members must be in the Instructional Technology and Design program from which the student has taken courses from.
    - One member must have a statistical and/or research methodology background.
The committee will have the responsibility of developing the comprehensive exam questions and grading the exam.

**Comprehensive Examinations**

- The comprehensive exam will consist of a written and oral section.
- The written section of the comprehensive exam will consist of 12 hours of writing and will be extend over 2 days with the student writing for 5-7 hours per day.
  - The written comprehensive exam questions will cover the areas of:
    - Program Core
    - Research
    - Electives
- The comprehensive exams will be scheduled for administration during the second month of the fall, spring, and summer semesters.
- By the end of semester prior to the semester in which the student plans to take the comprehensive exam, the student must confirm with his/her Major Professor and notify the Department Chair in writing of his/her intent to take the comprehensive exam that semester.
- Questions on the written section of the comprehensive exam will be evaluated by the individual committee member who submitted the question(s).
- For a “Pass” score, the student must receive a “pass vote” by the majority of the committee members. If the vote by the committee members is divided between half “pass” and “no pass,” the committee will meet to determine whether the student must retake the written section or can proceed with the oral section of the comprehensive examination.
- A “No Pass” is given if a majority of the committee members vote a “no pass” on the given question(s). Students may be granted a second examination at the next regularly scheduled time or later.
- The student must be registered for a minimum of 3 hours of coursework during the semester in which he/she takes the comprehensive exam.
- Oral section of the comprehensive examinations will follow the successful completion of the written section.
  - If the student receives a “Pass” on the written component, the student will proceed toward the oral examination.
  - If the vote was divided between “pass” and “no pass” on the written component, the committee members will make the final determination whether the student can proceed toward the oral. If less than half of the committee members votes “pass” on the written component, the student cannot proceed toward the oral examination.

**Establishing the Dissertation Committee**

- Upon successful completion of the comprehensive exam, the student will select his/her Major Professor (this may or may not be the faculty member who served as his/her
advisor) and begin working with his/her Major Professor to establish the Dissertation Committee.

- The members of the Dissertation Committee should be established prior to the end of the semester in which the comprehensive exam was taken.
- The Dissertation Committee must consist of a chair (an IT faculty) and a minimum of 3 other members (4 is recommended), one of whom should be a faculty member whose specialty is research/statistics. At least one should be an IT faculty member from which the student has taken courses from.
- All committee members must complete the “Responsible Conduct of Research” training modules.
- After the student passes the comprehensive exam, continuous enrollment in at least one (1) semester hour must be maintained during each Fall and Spring semester until the student defends his/her dissertation.

**The Dissertation Process**

- During the dissertation process, all students must complete twelve (9) hours of IT 898, Dissertation. Continuous enrollment in at least one (1) semester hour must be maintained during each Fall and Spring semester until the student defends his/her dissertation. A minimum of three (3) credit hours of IT 898 must be completed during the semester in which the dissertation and/or proposal is defended.
- The student submits three documents to a doctoral committee: a pre-proposal, a proposal, and a completed dissertation. The last two documents will be defended orally.

  - The student prepares a pre-proposal describing the rationale, problem, procedures, and expected nature of results for his/her dissertation (see instructions and cover page at end of this document). The pre-proposal is reviewed by the major professor, and when approved, is submitted to the other members of the committee for approval and signing (*Pre-Proposal Response sheet*).

  - The proposal for the dissertation is more complete. The first three chapters need to be written and thoroughly explained. These three chapters include the (1) introduction, (2) literature review, and (3) methodology that describe the instruments and methods of data collection. Proposals are first reviewed by the major professor who provides suggestions and recommendations on the content in the proposal. The prospectus should be paginated and include title page, table of contents, appendix and references along with the chapter texts. Students work closely with their chair to develop an appropriate prospectus and *may not send the document to individual committee members until the chair, in consultation with the committee’s statistician/methodologist, determines the prospectus is ready for review by the committee*. The student must provide copies of the prospectus to each committee member **at least 12 working days** prior to the prospectus meeting. Once all of the committee members indicate that they have no major problems with the proposal and ready for the oral defense, the student will be notified. A *Dissertation Proposal or Prospectus Approval Form* is to be completed after the successful defense of the prospectus.
The dissertation should follow the guidelines provided by the graduate school and typically follows the most current APA format unless otherwise indicated by the dissertation chair. The *Student Manual for Preparing Theses and Dissertations* is the official style guide for dissertations approved at The University of Southern Mississippi.

- The dissertation is typically of book length and generally consists of five (5) chapters: *Introduction, Review of Literature, Methodology, Results,* and *Conclusions.* The student should consult with his or her dissertation chair and statistician/methodologist in the development of the dissertation document and should clarify format, length and other expectations.
- Students may not send the document to individual committee members until the chair, in consultation with the committee’s statistician/methodologist, determines the dissertation is ready for review by the committee.
- The student must provide copies of the dissertation to each committee member at least 12 working days prior to the defense.

*An oral defense of the dissertation is conducted at a time and place suggested by the major professor, who presides at the examination.*

- The final copy must be provided to committee members no later than three weeks prior to the defense date to provide committee members adequate time to review the dissertation.
- Any changes agreed upon during the defense must be approved in final typed form by the committee member who suggested them, or by the major professor, by delegation of the committee.
- The examining committee completes and signs a form certifying to the Graduate Dean the results of the examination: passed, passed with revisions, or failed.
- The student must register for three (3) hours of IT 898 during the semester he/she defends the dissertation.
- All required coursework must be completed before the semester in which the dissertation is defended.

**Doctoral Student Documentation Requirements**

The doctoral student must have the documents listed below on file with The Graduate School. Students are advised to check their files in The Graduate School for completeness of documentation. Students should check the "milestone" section of their advising transcript (GRDII) to verify these documents have been received by The Graduate School. See [www.usm.edu/graduateschool](http://www.usm.edu/graduateschool) for list of forms and online versions of forms.

**A. Plan of Study Form.** Students must submit a "plan of study" form to The Graduate School by their second semester of enrollment. See [http://www.usm.edu/graduate-school/plans-study-doctoral-programs](http://www.usm.edu/graduate-school/plans-study-doctoral-programs) for specific directions.
B. **Research and Scholarly Integrity Education.** Students must submit the RSIE completion certificate by the end of the 2nd month of the first semester they are enrolled. (November, March, July). See this web page: [http://www.usm.edu/graduate-school/plans-study-doctoral-programs](http://www.usm.edu/graduate-school/plans-study-doctoral-programs).

C. **Qualifying Exam Results Form.** The department chair should submit the form to the graduate degree auditor indicating that the student has completed the qualifying exam if it is required. See Progress Degree Forms at [http://www.usm.edu/graduate-school/degree-and-graduation-information](http://www.usm.edu/graduate-school/degree-and-graduation-information).

D. **Doctoral Committee Appointment Form.** The department chair should submit the form to The Graduate School indicating who will serve on the student's committee. A letter of appointment will be sent to the committee members and adviser by the dean of the Graduate School. See Progress Degree Forms at [http://www.usm.edu/graduate-school/degree-and-graduation-information](http://www.usm.edu/graduate-school/degree-and-graduation-information).

E. **Comprehensive Exam Results Form.** The doctoral committee chair should submit the results of the comprehensive exam form to the graduate degree auditor. See Progress Degree Forms at [http://www.usm.edu/graduate-school/degree-and-graduation-information](http://www.usm.edu/graduate-school/degree-and-graduation-information).

F. **Application for Degree.** The student should present two copies of the Application for Degree form, and pay fees during the semester preceding that of graduation. See [http://www.usm.edu/graduate-school/application-degree](http://www.usm.edu/graduate-school/application-degree) for details. Students can pay fees online. Students not graduating in the semester for which they applied must contact the graduate degree auditor and submit a deferment form.

G. **Dissertation Prospectus Approval and Application for Candidacy Form.** After completing all the requirements for the doctoral degree other than the dissertation and after the dissertation prospectus has been approved at least one semester prior to graduation, the student must file two copies of the form with the graduate degree auditor and one copy with the adviser, before or at the time the application for degree is filed. **Students are reminded to secure approval of the Human Subjects Review Committee or the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee if necessary. Approval letters must be in an appendix.** Students should consult the chair of these committees as to the need for Human Subjects (IRB) and IACUC approval.

H. **Dissertation Defense Results Form.** The doctoral committee chair should submit the results of the oral defense of the dissertation form to the graduate reader immediately following the defense. See Progress Degree Forms at [http://www.usm.edu/graduate-school/degree-and-graduation-information](http://www.usm.edu/graduate-school/degree-and-graduation-information). A copy of the dissertation title page should also be submitted. Final copies of the dissertation must be deposited in The Graduate School (see deadlines: [http://www.usm.edu/graduate-school/deadlines](http://www.usm.edu/graduate-school/deadlines)).
I. Pre-Proposal Guidelines

PURPOSE

The purpose of the Pre-Proposal is to determine if the student has conceptualized an appropriate research topic. The student’s dissertation committee reviews the Pre-Proposal to determine if the topic is both acceptable and researchable and gives constructive feedback to guide the student toward an appropriate research focus. The Pre-Proposal is considered the initial step toward the completion of the dissertation. Once approved by at least three members of the committee, the student may then proceed with the development of a full Proposal (basically, Chapters I, II, and III). Only after the approval of the Proposal can a student seek appropriate IRB approval and commence with the study.

POLICY

ITD doctoral students must submit a Pre-Proposal and gain approval of their committee members no later than one semester prior to their Proposal Defense.

PRE-PROPOSAL FORMAT

The pre-proposal document should be 5-10 pages in length and should include the following information:

1. General Research Question(s): What does the study seek to investigate? What variables might you examine and how do you plan to measure/analyze them?
2. Rationale for Study: What is the importance of the study? How will your study make a contribution to the field? Why is this research needed?
3. Support for Study: What is the theoretical basis for the study? Provide a ‘brief’ narrative of evidence found in the literature that would support the legitimacy of your proposed study. This may include reference to similar studies.
4. Procedures: At this stage, how do you foresee completing the study? How will the data be collected? Where? When? Who will be involved/participants?

PRE-PROPOSAL APPROVAL

Each ITD doctoral student should meet individually with committee members and provide a copy of the Pre-Proposal (with the Pre-Proposal Response Sheet attached) no later than the end of the semester prior to the anticipated semester for the defense of the Proposal. Each committee member will be asked to provide the student with constructive feedback regarding the study. A committee member may ask the student to modify and/or resubmit the Pre-Proposal document prior to granting approval to proceed. Once a Pre-Proposal Response Sheet is signed by the chair, the statistician/research expert, and at least one other committee member, the student may proceed with the development of the full Proposal (Chapters I, II, and III).
Dear Committee Member,

Please review the attached Pre-Proposal Document and provide feedback below. Your signature denotes that you have read the Pre-Proposal and have indicated whether or not I can proceed with the development of my Proposal (Chapters I, II, and III). Your signature does not indicate approval of the Dissertation Proposal.

1. General Research Question(s)
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________

2. Rationale for Study
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________

3. Support for Study
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________

4. Procedures
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________

Check Approval Status:  ______ Approved to Proceed to Proposal Stage
                           ______ Not Approved to Proceed to Proposal Stage

______________________________________________________________
Committee Member’s Signature Date