

Doctoral Thesis Proposal Guidelines
Department of Women's Studies and Feminist Research
The University of Western Ontario

Timing and Examination

All doctoral students must have their thesis supervisor chosen and approved by the Graduate Chair by September 15 of their second year of study. It is important for the supervisor to be involved in the development of the thesis proposal. Part of the process is the selection of the thesis supervisory committee. The thesis supervisory committee will have three members: the supervisor and two other faculty from the University of Western Ontario. These should be chosen for their particular expertise relative to the topic of investigation. The supervisor and student should recommend the two additional committee members for approval by the Graduate Chair by January 15 in the second year of the PhD program. The thesis proposal itself is due by March 1 of that same year, and will be examined by the supervisory committee by April 30.

Summary of Key Dates:

Selection of Supervisor: September 15 of Year 2

Selection of Supervisory Committee: January 15 of Year 2

Submission of Thesis Proposal: March 1 of Year 2

Details of Proposal:

The thesis proposal should be approximately 20-25 pages, plus bibliography. It must include a:

- working title for the dissertation
- clear and succinct introductory one page abstract of the proposed dissertation topic
- review of the literature in the field of investigation, demonstrating how the proposed topic will make a significant contribution and fill a gap in existing knowledge (13-15 pages)
- discussion of the methods or theoretical framework that will be used to address this topic, justifying why you have chosen this approach (3-5 pages)
- detailed plan and timeline for accomplishment of the work from research to writing, including ethics approval for research with human subjects if necessary. All work must be completed within the four year time frame of the PhD program. (2 pages)
- listing of chapter headings with a brief preliminary description of the contents of each (2 pages)
- supervision plan. In recognition of the interdisciplinary nature of the program, and the differing roles of supervisory committees in different disciplines, it will be left to the supervisor to establish the role of the supervisory committee. This should be clearly stated in the thesis proposal. It is recommended, however, that the supervisory committee should meet at least once a year, and that all members should review and approve the final draft of the thesis before it goes to defence. (1 page)
- bibliography (3-5 pages)

Examination

The candidate will be invited to give an oral presentation of approximately 15 minutes, followed by two rounds of questions by the three members of the committee, the first round being approximately 20 minutes each and the second approximately 10 minutes each. This exam is graded on a pass/fail basis, by unanimous agreement of the examiners. If one or more examiners does not pass the proposal, then the committee will establish the terms of revision and a new exam will be held before June 30. A student who fails the proposal by one or both of the examiners a second time will be asked to withdraw from the program.