PhD in Computing and Information Sciences
Dissertation Proposal Process

Policy and Guidelines

POLICY

The dissertation proposal is intended to explain a student's dissertation research direction and to convince faculty that the student is prepared to conduct this research. It should be written and defended after the student completes coursework, within 24 months of completing the Research Potential Assessment. The proposal must be approved prior to beginning the final dissertation research.

Before beginning work on the dissertation, the PhD student will follow this process:

(a) Form a dissertation committee (see *Student Dissertation Committee Policy*).

(b) Submit a dissertation proposal to the committee and the PhD Program Director. The proposal should be submitted at least three weeks prior to the scheduled defense.

(c) Present and defend the proposal to the committee and the PhD faculty at large in an open forum. The defense allows for revisions to the proposal and a possible re-presentation.

(d) To pass the proposal defense, the student must obtain unanimous approval from the dissertation committee and the PhD Director. The committee will arrive at a unanimous final result for the defense. The possible outcomes for a proposal defense are: "*Passed,*" "*Passed subject to revision,*" "*Failed but may be resubmitted,*" and "*Failed.*" The student's advisor(s) will record the dissertation committee's decision using the *GCCIS PhD Dissertation Proposal Exam Result Form*, and then submit this form to the PhD Director after the defense. The student's advisor(s) must request the result form from the GCCIS PhD office prior to the defense.

It is the responsibility of the advisor(s) to communicate with the student about required revisions and other requirements. If the proposal is *Passed subject to revision*, the final dissertation proposal must be submitted within three months from the date of the dissertation proposal examination. After receiving the revised proposal, the program director and the advisor(s) will determine whether the revisions are acceptable, and sign the *revision satisfactory* section in the *GCCIS PhD Dissertation Proposal Exam Result Form*. In the case where the proposal outcome is *Failed but may be resubmitted*, the entire examination process will be repeated, including the re-establishment of a dissertation proposal examination committee. At least three months must pass before the student may submit a new proposal for re-examination.

(e) After the proposal defense, each dissertation committee member will complete the *GCCIS PhD Program Objective Assessment Form* anonymously and submit it to the PhD Program Director. This form is mainly used to evaluate students' academic and research skills according to the four program objectives of the PhD program for program quality control and assessment purposes. This information is not to be shared with the student without approval of the PhD Director.

GUIDELINES

A typical Dissertation Proposal is expected to be approximately 20-40 double-spaced pages. It is assumed that much of the proposal will be re-usable in the final dissertation.

The Dissertation Proposal should especially focus on describing the value of the new work and the history of related research, along with the general methodological approach towards completing the project. The following format is advisable, although not absolutely required of all proposals. The student's Dissertation Committee may (with justification) alter the structure of the written proposal.

Follow the Ph.D. Proposal & Dissertation Template for the suggested Format for the dissertation proposal.

Suggested Format for the Dissertation Proposal

1. *Title.*
2. *Problem Introduction.* To what general area of *Computing & Information Sciences* does this apply? What are the issues? Why is this area important? What contribution (theory, practice, methodology) would this make to the field?
3. *Literature Review*. Although the work is original, it will "stand on the shoulders" of others. What are the major existing areas that this work is based upon? What previous thinking exists? The student should show awareness of the broad body of research that exists, should be conversant in debates and unresolved issues.
4. *Research Questions*. What question(s) do you intend to answer?
5. *Methodology*. How will the student go about answering the research questions? If human subjects are needed, how will they be selected? Are the needed tools available (computer networks, hardware, etc.)? What will be built or created? (Testing protocols, programs, treatments, etc.)
6. *References*. This should include all references in the proposal.

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