

Dissertation Protocols

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Now that you've successfully defended your dissertation proposal, it is time to begin your research and write it up! You've come a long way and are in the final phase of your doctoral program.

For these culminating steps, you will work closely with your advisor and the rest of the Advisory Conference Committee to produce a document that reflects your research and presents your contribution to the library and information studies discipline.

In your SLIS doctoral proposal you have outlined your research plans and provided a foundation of the first three chapters of your dissertation. You will work with your committee to determine how to expand on these chapters as well as what additional material and chapters, relevant to your research, will be necessary once you have completed your research.

According to the OU Graduate College, **"A doctoral candidate is expected to complete all degree requirements, including the defense and final submission of the dissertation, within five calendar years after passing the general examination."** Additional information regarding timelines can be found at: <https://www.ou.edu/gradcollege/forms-and-policies/graduate-college-bulletin#8.2.6>.

In order to work within the time limits allowed, it is up to students to set appropriate goals for themselves and with their committees to make sure that the dissertation will be completed. Don't let yourself be sidetracked; postponing will only make it harder to finish – consult with your committee if you encounter any difficulties. It is easy to lose momentum and become discouraged, but your advisor and committee are available to support you.

Your Dissertation Defense:

To be prepared for your defense, it is important to plan well, and below you will see links to the Graduate College guidelines. On the day of your defense, you should be prepared to spend 2.5-3 hours in the defense, which will include a formal presentation of approximately 40 minutes explaining your research, with the remaining time reserved for your Advisory Conference Committee to ask you questions and provide feedback. As well, the Advisory Conference Committee, in conjunction with the student, will decide in advance if the general audience will be permitted to ask questions and/or make comments. After all questions have been asked and suggestions made, the student and general audience will be asked to leave the room while the committee deliberates.

The OU Graduate College has provided a detailed outline of the steps involved in the dissertation, which are copied below and can also be found at:

<https://www.ou.edu/gradcollege/forms-and-policies/graduate-college-bulletin#8.6>

It is the student's responsibility to make sure that all guidelines are adhered to, so please make sure you have read through them carefully.

8.6 THE DISSERTATION

The doctoral dissertation is the final and most important component of the series of academic experiences that culminate in the awarding of the doctoral degree.

- Three major functions are fulfilled by the dissertation experience:
 - It is a work of original research scholarship that makes a contribution to existing knowledge.
 - It demonstrates the student's mastery of research methods of the special field.
 - It demonstrates the student's ability to address a significant intellectual problem and arrive at a successful conclusion.
- The student should select a dissertation topic in consultation with the committee chair.
- A student whose dissertation research may involve any of the following should promptly contact the appropriate office for advice:
 - Human subjects: Contact the Institutional Review Board. (See also Use of Human Subjects in Research.)
 - Vertebrate animals: Contact the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee. (See also Use of Vertebrate Animals in Research.)
- Students whose dissertation research may involve any of the following should review the "Research Issues" section of the Graduate College [Thesis/Dissertation Instruction Packet](#) with their committee chair as early as possible in the research process, and inform their Graduate College counselor of the potential need for an embargo of their dissertation.
 - Information that is protected from dissemination by applicable law or by contract: Review the "Research Holds and IP Holds" section of the [Thesis/Dissertation Instruction Packet](#). Dissertations may not contain material that requires permanent restriction from publication.
 - Intellectual property that may potentially be patentable: Review the "Disclosure of Patentable Inventions" section of the [Thesis/Dissertation Instruction Packet](#).

8.6.1 ENROLLMENT REQUIREMENTS FOR DISSERTATION RESEARCH

- A student who is working on the dissertation during a regular semester must enroll in at least two hours of 6980, regardless of the total number of hours in which the student is enrolled.
- The number of credit hours for each enrollment in 6980 will be determined by the student's committee chair on the basis of the amount of faculty and university services required by the student during that enrollment.
- Students are required to enroll in 6980 during the summer session if the dissertation will be defended and/or the degree will be conferred in the summer session.
 - If the student will be doing academic work in university facilities (other than those generally open to the public, such as libraries and meeting spaces) during the summer and is not enrolled for summer, then they must have been enrolled during the previous spring semester and must be enrolled for fall at the time the work takes place. This arrangement requires the permission of the academic unit.
- After the first enrollment in 6980, the student must maintain continuous enrollment in at least two hours of 6980 during each fall and spring semester until all degree requirements are completed.
 - The continuous enrollment requirement will be waived only for a student who is not working on the dissertation *and* who is enrolled in at least nine graduate credit hours during a regular semester.
 - If a student has not maintained continuous enrollment in doctoral dissertation hours, the student must retroactively enroll in the number of hours of 6980 for each semester that would have been completed with continuous enrollment.
 - The student must pay a late enrollment fee for each semester that would have been completed with continuous enrollment. Retroactive fees and tuition are assessed at the current semester rates. The collection of the appropriate fees is the responsibility of the Office of the Registrar and Bursar Services.

8.7 DISSERTATION DEFENSE

- A student must be admitted to candidacy by the Graduate College before scheduling the dissertation defense.
- The student's *Advisory Conference Report (ACR)* must be up to date. Any changes to the ACR must be approved by the Graduate College before the defense can be authorized. (See Changes to the Advisory Conference Report.)
- A student should be in good academic standing during the semester the dissertation defense is scheduled.
- No later than the end of the second week of the semester in which the student intends to defend, the student should complete the online [Request for Degree Check](#) form through the Graduate College website.
- A student must submit the [Report of Reading Copy Submission and Request for Authority to Defend](#) form to the Graduate College and receive authority before defending the dissertation. The result of an unauthorized dissertation defense will not, under any circumstances, be considered valid.
- Only one attempt to defend the dissertation is permitted. If the defense is unsatisfactory, it cannot be repeated.
- A student must be enrolled in at least two credit hours of 6980 at the University of Oklahoma during the semester of the dissertation defense.

8.7.1 DISSERTATION DRAFT

- Before scheduling the dissertation defense, the candidate is responsible for providing every member of the doctoral committee with a complete draft of the dissertation. Formatting requirements are explained in the [Thesis/Dissertation Instruction Packet](#).
- While the Graduate College recommends the dissertation draft be submitted to the committee at least 30 days prior to the defense, the doctoral committee will determine how far in advance the student should provide the draft to all committee members. This time limit should allow the committee sufficient time to review the dissertation and approve any major revisions required before the deadline for submitting the [Report of Reading Copy Submission and Request for Authority to Defend](#) form to the Graduate College.
 - Students must submit this form at least ten working days before the defense.
 - At least five working days before the defense, the committee members must sign to affirm they have reviewed the reading copy and support the student's request for authority to defend.
- The committee will read the dissertation and determine whether it demonstrates the student's ability to conduct original research and makes a significant contribution to the student's discipline.
 - If the committee rejects the dissertation, the student will have another opportunity to submit an acceptable dissertation to the committee.
 - If the committee accepts the dissertation, the student may be required to make further changes and corrections.

8.7.2 SCHEDULING THE DISSERTATION DEFENSE

The date, time, and location of the dissertation defense must be scheduled according to the following requirements:

- No changes in committee membership are permitted 30 calendar days before the dissertation defense.
- The defense should be held before the deadline indicated on the [Academic Calendar](#). The defense may not be held during the period of final course examinations, nor may it be held while the university is not in session.
- The defense is open to the public, unless closed by prior approval of the Office of Technology Commercialization under the University Intellectual Property Policy.

8.7.3 PARTICIPATION IN THE DISSERTATION DEFENSE

Advances in electronic media have made it possible for meetings to be held without the presence of every member at the same location. Nevertheless, the integrity and significance of the defense process must be maintained. The following rules apply to the dissertation defense:

- All members of the committee must participate for the full duration of the event, whether in person or remotely.
- If any member of the committee participating remotely is unable to connect or loses their connection, the event must pause until the connection is restored.
- Prior approval may be sought from the dean of the Graduate College if the absence of one committee member (other than the committee chair or Graduate College representative) is unavoidable. An event cannot be held in the absence of more than one committee member.
- All committee members must have full access to materials relevant to the evaluation of the student's performance. Audio of the student and other committee members, and visual materials including slides and handwritten information, must be clearly transmitted. If these requirements are not met, the event must pause until the issue is corrected.
- Only members of the committee may be present for deliberations about the result.
- For events involving remote participation, we recommend the following practices:
 - Ensure that all committee members can access the selected remote meeting platform. Test the remote participation set-up with the student and all members well in advance to ensure there are no predictable technical or connection problems.
 - Have the committee chair or another faculty or staff member who will be present serve as host of the meeting.
 - Ensure that there is not a time limit that will truncate the meeting.
 - Ensure that the remote meeting platform supports the feature that allows the host to remove participants.
 - Plan for transmission of visual materials including handouts, slides, and handwritten information. If the event will involve live handwriting by the student, use of a whiteboard application, document camera, or similar should be practiced by the student and tested in advance.
 - Plan for the committee's confidential deliberations (e.g. through breakout room or waiting room functions within a remote meeting platform).
 - Minimize distractions by muting participants' audio on entry and disabling audio notifications of participants' arrival or departure.
 - Ensure that the student and each committee member are in appropriate private or professional environments with audible and visible distractions minimized.
 - Request that committee members keep their cameras on as much as possible during the event. The student should have their camera on for the duration of the event.
 - Make a backup connection plan in case there are difficulties with the remote meeting platform or individual connections.

- Host blended events (combining in-person and remote participation) in a space that is designed and equipped for such events. If this is not possible, consider solutions such as an individual laptop for each in-person participant so that remote participants have a clear view.
- Share remote meeting connection information with all faculty and graduate students in the academic unit so they can attend. Encourage the student to invite family and friends. If the event is publicized more broadly, invite interested audience members to email the academic unit for remote meeting connection information.

8.7.4 DEGREE CHECK

No later than the second week of the semester in which the student intends to defend the dissertation, the student must complete the online [Request for Degree Check](#) form. The Graduate College will notify the student of the result of the degree check via OU email.

- Failure to complete the degree check may result in postponement of the defense to a subsequent semester.

8.7.5 AUTHORITY FOR THE DISSERTATION DEFENSE

- After requesting a degree check and scheduling the defense, the student must submit the online [Report of Reading Copy Submission and Request for Authority to Defend](#) form to the Graduate College at least 10 working days before the defense.
 - At least five working days before the defense, the committee members must sign to affirm they have reviewed the reading copy and support the student's request for authority to defend.
- If the request for authority can be approved, the Graduate College will issue the *Authority Report Form for the Dissertation Defense* to the student, the doctoral committee, and the graduate liaison via OU email. The student may not defend until this form has been issued. The result of an unauthorized defense will not, under any circumstances, be considered valid.
- The *Authority Report Form* is valid only for the period indicated on the form.
 - If the defense is not held during this period, the graduate liaison or committee chair must notify the Graduate College in writing as to why the defense was not held and the form must be returned marked “Not Taken.”
 - The dissertation defense must then be rescheduled for a future term and the student must submit a new *Request for Degree Check* and *Report of Reading Copy Submission and Request for Authority to Defend* form.

8.7.6 RESULT OF THE DISSERTATION DEFENSE

- After the dissertation defense, the committee will report its decision on the *Authority Report Form for the Dissertation Defense* by indicating a “satisfactory” or “unsatisfactory” result. This completed form must be received in the Graduate College within three working days of the dissertation defense.
- In the event that the committee does not reach a unanimous decision:
 - The committee member(s) who dissent from the majority opinion, , or who judge the defense unsatisfactory when the committee is evenly split, should not sign the *Authority Report Form*, but should instead attach a memo explaining the rationale for the dissent.
 - The dean of the Graduate College will make preliminary inquiries to understand the circumstances leading to the dissent.

- If there is any indication of irregularities, the Graduate College will investigate, to include, among other things, meeting with members of the committee and reviewing relevant documents. If an investigation is initiated, notice to the student will be provided and the student will be given an opportunity to speak with the Graduate College investigator.
- In the event of irregularities, the dean may accept the majority opinion or invalidate the defense. The dean will reverse the majority opinion only in extraordinary circumstances. The decision of the dean is final.
- If no irregularities are identified and a majority of the committee concurs, the dissent is recognized as a minority report and the majority opinion is accepted.
- If no irregularities are identified and the committee is evenly split, then the dean of the Graduate College will make a final decision based on investigation.

8.7.7 UNSATISFACTORY RESULT AND DISMISSAL

- In the event of an unsatisfactory result, the decision is final and the defense cannot be repeated. The student will be dismissed from the graduate program.
- A dismissed student who wishes to apply to a graduate program in another major field should refer to the Academic Dismissal and Application of Credit from an Unsuccessful Doctoral Degree to a Master's Degree sections of this bulletin.

8.7.8 SATISFACTORY RESULT AND DISSERTATION SUBMISSION

- After a satisfactory dissertation defense, the student must complete any revisions required by the committee before submitting the final dissertation to the SHAREOK repository. Submission instructions provided by the Graduate College in the email authorizing the dissertation defense.
- The final dissertation is due within 60 calendar days of the defense. A student planning to graduate in a given semester may need to submit the final document sooner in order to meet the graduation deadline for that semester indicated on the [Academic Calendar](#).
- A student who does not submit the final dissertation during the semester of the defense must enroll in at least two hours of 6980 during the semester in which the dissertation is submitted.
- The semester in which the dissertation is submitted will be the semester of graduation if all other outstanding requirements for the degree have been completed.
- Before submitting the final dissertation to SHAREOK, the student must:
 - Complete the *Survey of Earned Doctorates*.
 - Submit the [Approval for Thesis/Dissertation Submission to SHAREOK](#) form to the Graduate College.
 - The committee members must sign this form to indicate that the student is eligible to submit the final document to SHAREOK.
 - If a majority of members indicate that the dissertation has not been satisfactorily revised, the SHAREOK submission will be rejected.
 - If a majority of members indicate that the student is eligible to submit to SHAREOK but one or more members dissents, the dean of the Graduate College will follow a dissenting opinion process parallel to those described in [Result of the Thesis Defense](#) and [Result of the Dissertation Defense](#).
- If the thesis involves human subjects research, the student must also submit additional documentation from the IRB to the Graduate College before submitting the final thesis to SHAREOK.

- It is the student's responsibility to ensure the final dissertation submitted to SHAREOK meets all formatting requirements outlined in the [Thesis/Dissertation Instruction Packet](#). Submissions that contain formatting errors will be rejected.

8.7.9 FAILURE TO SUBMIT DISSERTATION

- A student may not graduate until all degree requirements, including submission of the final dissertation and associated items (*Survey of Earned Doctorates*, *Approval for Thesis/Dissertation Submission to SHAREOK* form, and IRB documentation if applicable) have been completed.
- If the dissertation submission is not completed within 60 calendar days of the satisfactory defense, the result of the defense will be set aside and the student will need to repeat the defense.
- A student required to repeat the dissertation defense under these circumstances will need to repeat the processes described in the Dissertation Defense section of this bulletin, including submission of a new *Request for Degree Check* form and *Report of Reading Copy Submission and Request for Authority to Defend* form.
- Students must [apply for graduation online](#) at the beginning of the semester in which they plan to graduate, according to the deadlines indicated on the [Academic Calendar](#).
- A student may not graduate until all degree requirements are completed, including the application for graduation.
- A student will graduate during the semester in which all degree requirements are completed.
- Students will become inactive after graduation and may not continue enrolling at the university unless they are admitted to a new program or non-degree seeking status.
- Doctoral candidates are individually recognized and hooded on stage at the university-wide Commencement ceremony. Students who wish to participate in Commencement or in a College Convocation ceremony should see the [OU Commencement website](#).

8.8 DEGREE COMPLETION AND GRADUATION

- Students must apply for graduation online the semester before they intend to graduate, according to the deadlines indicated on the Academic Calendar.
- A student may not graduate until all degree requirements are completed, including the application for graduation.
- A student will graduate during the semester in which all degree requirements are completed. Students will become inactive after graduation and may not continue enrolling at the university unless they are admitted to a new program or non-degree seeking status.
- Doctoral candidates are individually recognized and hooded on stage at the university-wide Commencement ceremony. Students who wish to participate in Commencement or in a College Convocation ceremony should see the OU Commencement website for information about attending college convocation ceremonies and May Commencement.

SLIS encourages doctoral students to familiarize themselves with all information that is available in the Graduate College Bulletin.