

The Dissertation Prospectus and Prospectus Conference Policies and Procedures

The prospectus consists of an essay and bibliography setting forth the nature of the research project, its relation to existing scholarship and criticism on the subject, and its anticipated value. The essay is meant to serve as an introductory "working paper" that articulates in 10-15 pages the issues to be addressed in the dissertation, the approach the candidate expects to take, the relation of that approach to recent knowledge and judgment as expressed in published sources, and an indication of how the candidate plans to begin the project. Any prospectus exceeding 15 pages will be returned to its author for condensation. The bibliography, of approximately 5 pages, represents a preliminary survey of the pertinent primary and secondary literature. The prospectus should be developed in consultation with the dissertation director and presented for his or her approval within one or two semesters following the qualifying examination.

Since the prospectus conference is not an examination, the director must not allow the conference to be scheduled until he or she is reasonably satisfied that the prospectus has been carefully written and proofread, that its bibliographic citations are pertinent and up to date, and that the general line of proposed argument is sound. The prospectus conference is not an appropriate setting for negotiating fundamental differences between the candidate and director.

When the student is ready to schedule a prospectus conference, he or she must first submit a copy of the prospectus, approved and signed by the dissertation director, to the Graduate Chair at least two weeks prior to the conference date, and then distribute copies to the other dissertation committee members. Prior to the conference, the student must also obtain from the Graduate Office the prospectus approval form which the dissertation director should sign after the conference, giving final approval to proceed with the dissertation; the student should return the signed approval form to the Graduate Office. All candidates are asked to schedule their own conferences for an hour convenient to all parties. Please see the Graduate Office for room availability.

At the prospectus conference, the committee members explore with the candidate the issues outlined in the proposal. Normally the conference takes about an hour. Its purpose is to enable the candidate to begin work on the dissertation having benefited from a full and detailed discussion with all the concerned faculty present. If it seems appropriate, the Graduate Chair may request further written clarification of the project before giving it final approval. After the conference, the candidate writes a memorandum of the discussion and submits copies to each member of the committee and to the Graduate Chair, whose copy will be placed in the candidate's file. The other three copies will serve the dissertation committee members as a baseline of expectations and will be especially useful in the next year's meeting of the dissertation candidate with his or her committee-- a gathering now mandated by the Graduate Division, which expects an annual report of progress toward completion.