

**An Excerpt from the
DIVISION OF MEDICAL SCIENCES (DMS)
ACADEMIC RULES AND GUIDELINES
2017-2018**

The Dissertation Defense

- **The Dissertation:** The dissertation must show original treatment of a fitting subject, contain a scholarly review of the pertinent literature, give evidence of independent research, and be clearly, logically, and carefully written. Students are expected to give a public seminar on their dissertation research.

- **Attributions to the Dissertation:** The Ph.D. dissertation is expected to contain a substantial amount of independent research work of publishable quality. In addition to chapters of research, each dissertation must contain Introduction and Conclusion chapters that present the themes of the dissertation and summarize the accomplishments. In some cases, the student has done all of the work in the dissertation; more often portions of the dissertation result from collaborative research. In all dissertations containing collaborative results, the dissertation should indicate concisely who contributed the work.

For example, a chapter containing multi-authored, published work must include a complete reference and a brief description of the candidate's and the colleagues' contributions. For work that is not published but which resulted from multiple researchers, the contributors must be named and respective attributions made clearly. This policy allows stylistic flexibility; depending on the amount of collaborative work in the dissertation and the status of publication(s), the attributions can be together at the end of either the Acknowledgments or Introduction sections of the dissertation or before each relevant chapter.

It is permissible for more than one student to include work from the same collaboration or publication as long as the required attributions are clear, justified, and complete.

Individual chapters can be that of published articles as long as there are comprehensive Introduction and Conclusion chapters written by the student. Use of actual reprints as a chapter is not permissible. A word document of the published article must be used in place of a reprint as pages in the dissertation must be consecutively numbered. **Any dissertation that varies significantly from the Graduate School or FAS guidelines or is not neat and readable is subject to required stylistic revision before acceptance**

by the University. (See the Form of the PhD Dissertation handout, available through the DMS office or at www.gsas.harvard.edu/current_students/form_of_the_phd_dissertation.php.)

- **Preparation for the Dissertation Defense:** The FAS Registrar specifies deadlines by which the dissertation must be submitted and the dissertation examination passed to receive the Ph.D. diploma in November, March, or May of each academic year. A dissertation information packet is available in the Division office specifying the steps to be taken when the student is ready to apply for the Ph.D. degree and the various forms that need to be submitted. The information packet will be thoroughly reviewed with the student by a member of the Division staff.
- **Examiners:** The student and the student's dissertation advisor must select at least four examining committee members: an examination chair (who is a member of the dissertation advisory committee), and three examiners.
- The dissertation advisor, along with the student, arranges the date, time, and place of the examination and seminar after contacting the examination committee; some programs may have the program administrator make these arrangements. At least four weeks before the scheduled date, the student submits the Program Approval and Proposed Examiners forms and Dissertation Information sheet to the Division of Medical Sciences, along with an abstract and title page.

The Director of Graduate Studies of the Division of Medical Sciences, the student's dissertation advisor and the Head or designated faculty member of the candidate's program will approve the members from a list submitted by the candidate and his or her advisor (the Proposed Examiners form). All proposed examiners must be the rank of assistant professor or higher at an academic institution. The chair of the exam committee as well as at least one examiner must be faculty from the Division of Medical Sciences; the dissertation advisor is not eligible to be an examiner or the chair, but usually attends the exam ex officio. To broaden the examination and enhance its significance, one member of the examination committee must be from outside Harvard University. **Candidates are required to have one, but not more than one, member of the advisory committee become a member of the examination committee in the role of committee chair.** The examination committee chair, who is the DAC chair or else another member of the dissertation advisory committee, does not function as a voting examiner but may participate in the questioning of the candidate. An alternate examiner may be requested by the student, the dissertation advisor, the program, or the Division. If an alternate examiner is selected, the alternate must be available to attend the seminar and defense, and must receive and read a copy of the dissertation.

Past collaborators and co-authors are usually not appropriate to be examiners. It is the student's responsibility to indicate any possible relationship of this kind. Faculty members who have collaborated with the student or the student's advisor on the student's area of research within the past five years may not serve on the exam committee. Faculty with whom the student has done a regular laboratory rotation in the process of selecting the dissertation laboratory are eligible if there are no other collaborations. Students may therefore petition DMS to approve examiners whose collaboration with the student or advisor was not directly related to the dissertation research.

The exam committee should be assembled as follows:

Exam Chair: Dissertation Advisory Committee member *and* DMS faculty member.

Examiner 1: DMS faculty member.

Examiner 2: Non-Harvard-affiliated faculty member.

Examiner 3: Faculty member from any institution.

All of the above must have an academic appointment of assistant professor or higher from an academic institution. None of the members other than the chair may have served on the student's DAC.

Note:

1. *Emeritus Faculty may not serve on a student's examining committee unless that student has been under the supervision of that faculty member, e.g. the dissertation advisory committee.*

2. *If the student's non-Harvard examiner is a former Harvard professor, then the following requirements must be met before s/he is eligible to serve on the committee as an external examiner:*

➤ *the faculty member should have served in his post-Harvard position for at least one year*

➤ *the faculty member should have not participated directly with the student in any other capacity (e.g. as a program advisor, dissertation advisory committee member, qualifying exam committee member) during her/his time at Harvard.*

3. *All exceptions to these rules must be approved by the Chair or Vice Chair of the Division of Medical Sciences.*

4. *Programs may have additional requirements for the composition of the defense committee. Please consult with your Program Administrator for more information.*

Students must present one unbound loose-leaf copy of the dissertation to the Division for formatting approval not less than 16 days before the examination. Once approved, students must distribute four unbound, loose-leaf copies of the dissertation to the members of the dissertation examination committee not less than 14 days before the examination. The candidate should consult with the dissertation advisor concerning the need for additional copies. Should the dissertation be delivered late to the readers, the examination will be rescheduled unless other arrangements are agreed upon with the chair of the exam and examiners.

The examination committee chair is responsible for:

- i. contacting all readers not less than 72 hours before the examination to determine whether they find the dissertation generally acceptable. If one or more reader feel that there are substantive deficiencies that must be remedied to make the dissertation acceptable, the chair must contact or meet with the readers, the dissertation advisor, and the candidate to discuss the situation and decide whether to proceed with the examination. The Director of Graduate Studies of the Division of Medical Sciences and the chair of the student's Ph.D. program should be contacted immediately and kept apprised of the committee's decisions.
- ii. making sure that corrections to the dissertation are clearly defined and are carried out and approved in a timely fashion. A specific deadline for completion of corrections must be given to the student.
- iii. getting the dissertation examiners to sign the acceptance certificate at the end of the examination if the student successfully completes the examination.
- iv. immediately notifying DMS whether the student has passed his/ her dissertation defense examination and is thus eligible for the Ph.D.
- v. returning all student documents to the Division of Medical Sciences immediately following the examination.
- vi. if the defense is not successful, the chair of the exam must provide a thorough report to DMS and the student's program head detailing the areas of substantial deficiency of the dissertation.

For Dissertation Format: See **The Form of the PhD Dissertation** available in print from the DMS office and online at <http://www.gsas.harvard.edu/images/stories/pdfs/form%20of%20dissertation.pdf>. **It is important to adhere to these formatting guidelines** rather than refer to previous dissertations, as the Graduate School may not accept a dissertation which does not follow the rules laid out in this handout.

Application for Degree: The four required forms can be obtained from the Division.

1. The *Program Approval Form* requests approval from the candidate's dissertation advisor and Program Head. The student must obtain the required signatures and return the completed form to the Division at least four weeks before the dissertation examination.
2. The *Online Application for Degree* is to be completed and submitted online through the student's my.harvard.edu portal. The students must also complete a student exit survey to be submitted along with the application. The deadlines for online degree applications vary for each degree period and can be obtained by contacting the Division office.
3. The *Proposed Dissertation Examiners* form is a list of examination committee members proposed by the candidate and the candidate's advisor. The form must be approved and signed by the candidate's Program Head or designated representative as well as his/ her dissertation advisor. It should then be submitted to the Division of Medical Sciences at least four weeks before the scheduled examination. (See the section "Examiners" for the rules regarding selection of the committee members.)
4. The *Dissertation Examination Information* form is to be completed by the candidate and submitted directly to the Division at least four weeks before the dissertation examination. It needs no signatures.
5. The *Post Defense Information* form is to be completed by the candidate and submitted directly to the Division at least four weeks before the dissertation examination. If any information asked by the form is unknown, leave the appropriate section(s) blank; however the requested non_Harvard email address is required.

The Dissertation Abstract, Title Page, and Seminar Announcement: Candidates should submit a dissertation abstract and title page to the Division at least four weeks before the examination. The abstract should be double-spaced, and written in language comprehensible to all DMS faculty. From this point forward, the title becomes official and may not be changed. A seminar announcement will be prepared by the Division office.

Announcing the Dissertation Examination and Seminar: The Division office will email an announcement of the examination and seminar to all Division faculty members and students at least two weeks before the scheduled date. This will occur after the candidate has had the dissertation reviewed and approved in the Division office, and the dissertation has been distributed to the Exam Committee members.

Conduct of the Examination: Immediately prior to the examination, it is customary for the candidate to present the dissertation work in a seminar attended by the examination committee and the public. The formal examination typically lasts 90-120 minutes.

Dissertation Acceptance Certificate and Record of Final Examination: The examination committee chair is provided with two forms that should be completed following the examination.

1. The *Dissertation Acceptance Certificate* must be signed by all readers if the candidate passes the examination. The certificate should be returned promptly to the Division for submission to the Registrar when any necessary changes to the dissertation are completed (see below). An electronic copy of the certificate is emailed to the student once they receive a clear pass. The *Dissertation Acceptance Certificate* must be signed by all readers if the candidate passes the examination. The certificate should be returned promptly to the Division for submission to the Registrar when any necessary changes to the dissertation are completed (see below). An electronic copy of the certificate is emailed to the student once they receive a clear pass. The student must then digitally attach the certificate to the first page of the final dissertation and submit it electronically to the registrar's office online (see below).

2. The *Record of Final Ph.D. Examination* indicates the outcome of the examination and is completed by the examination committee chair. It should be submitted to the Division, where it will be filed as the official record of the examination.

Finishing up after the Dissertation Defense: Following the examination, the candidate must, with the help of the dissertation advisor, make any necessary corrections to the dissertation. If corrections require review, those revisions should be approved by the examination committee chair or by a faculty member designated by the committee chair, who will then notify the Division in writing that all revisions are complete. If no corrections are required, the candidate is expected to submit his/ her dissertation electronically via the Electronic Thesis and Dissertation Submission System found at <http://etds.lib.harvard.edu/gsas/> (see below for further instructions) by the deadline prescribed by the FAS Registrar. A copy of the Dissertation Acceptance Certificate must be included before the title page in the PDF file submitted online. The Dissertation Acceptance Certificate will appear in the electronic and bound copies of the dissertation. No page number should be assigned to this page.

The Ph.D. Dissertation Submission and Publication: Online submission of the dissertation is required by the Graduate School. The submission site is located at <http://etds.lib.harvard.edu/gsas/>. Dissertations must be received by 11:59 PM on the deadline date for the given degree period. **NO**

EXTENSIONS TO THIS DEADLINE ARE PROVIDED. Any supplemental material or copyright permissions should be included in the submission. Please see the GSAS website on dissertation submission or the tutorial on the homepage of the ETD submission tool for additional information. Dissertations must meet the formatting requirements set by the GSAS, which are outlined in the *Form of the PhD Dissertation* booklet available at http://www.gsas.harvard.edu/current_students/the_phd_dissertation.php. After the submission is complete, the student's term bill will be charged \$111 for three official bound copies, which will be delivered to the Harvard University archives, the student's program and advisor. Once the dissertation is submitted, the Registrar's Office will also review the document for formatting compliance. Any required changes or corrections will be communicated to the student and must be resolved before the degree can be conferred. Students will have up to one week past the submission deadline to submit any corrections requested by the Registrar's Office.

Please refer to the pamphlet, The Form of the PhD Dissertation, for instructions on online submission.

Binding Options and Delivery of the Dissertation

BBS students are required to submit a copy of the dissertation to their advisor's department on a CD.

M.D./ Ph.D. students are not required to submit a bound copy of the dissertation to the M.D./ Ph.D. office and H.S.T. Students must submit an additional copy to the H.S.T. office.