Starting the Dissertation Process
The Prospectus and Dissertation Supervisory Committee
March 2012

Introduction

The first step in completing your dissertation is to obtain an approved dissertation prospectus. To do so, there are two key documents that you will need to create, and two key faculty members that you will need to find.

The Dissertation Premise

The Premise is a one-to-two-page document that captures the initial investigation into your research topic. It is used in conjunction with the Nomination Form to select the members of your dissertation committee, discussed below. You can find more information on writing this document in the Dissertation Premise guide.

The Dissertation Prospectus

The Prospectus, which you develop with feedback from your dissertation committee, is a continuation of the Premise. It serves two functions:
1. Confirms the topic that you will be pursuing in your Dissertation Proposal.
2. Confirms your dissertation supervisory committee and the roles they will serve, and allows for assignment of a university research reviewer (URR).

You can find more information on writing this document in the Dissertation Prospectus guide, including the rubric that will be used to assess it.

Your Dissertation Supervisory Committee

There are variations in how students form their dissertation supervisory committees, depending largely on the structure of their program, the nature of their project, and their experiences as a student. Some general guidelines appear below, based on the committee roles.

The Chair

The first and most important step in forming your dissertation committee is to find a chair, who will work with you to complete the dissertation. The timing of this decision depends on the structure of your program (see Table 1). Ideally, you should start writing the Premise two quarters before you plan to start the Prospectus so that you have one quarter in which to identify, nominate, and receive confirmation of your chair. You can find more information on this process, on the Nomination Form.
Table 1
Recommended Timing for Confirming Your Chair, Based on Program Requirements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Forum</th>
<th>Companion Course</th>
<th>Prospectus Course*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SBSF 7100</td>
<td>MGMT 8100, EDUC</td>
<td>PPPA 8115, PSYC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8900</td>
<td>8115, COUN 8550,</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>MGMT 8990, PUBH</td>
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<td>8550, and HLTH 8550</td>
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Even though many KAM students continue with their Faculty Mentor as chair, you should submit the Premise and Nomination Form in the quarter prior to starting the prospectus. You need to submit the Premise and Nomination Form in the quarter prior to enrollment in the companion course with your chair. Students who take a prospectus course should plan on identifying your chair during this time and submitting the Premise and Nomination Form in the quarter prior to enrollment in a dissertation course with your chair.

*Includes students who go directly into the dissertation course with their chair.

The Second Member

Adding the second member to your committee also depends on the structure of your program, nature of your project, and, often, the preferences of your chair. Some students prefer to confirm both members before starting the prospectus. Other students add the second member during the prospectus development process. Both members should be confirmed, however, before you submit the final draft of your prospectus for review and approval and before you begin writing your dissertation proposal.

Content Expert and Methodologist

Two key functions are covered by the two committee members. One member needs to be identified as a content expert and one as the methodologist, although sometimes the same person can fill both roles. Many students start by clarifying with their chair which role(s) he/she will fill (content and/or method) and then identify the second member to complete the committee. More information on dissertation committees can be found in the Dissertation Guidebook.

The Third Member–the URR

The third member of your committee, the URR, is added after your prospectus has been fully developed, positively assessed against the prospectus rubric by your committee, and approved by your Program Director.

Finding Committee Members

Many resources exist for students who need support forming their dissertation committees. To learn more about these resources, some of which are program specific, contact your Academic Advisor. You may also want to search the Faculty Expertise Directory (FED), which can be found on your myWalden portal.