

**The Heller School for Social Policy and Management**

**Brandeis University**



**Dissertation Standards and Procedures**

2015

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## Purpose

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The purpose of the Ph.D. dissertation is to enable you to develop, exercise, and demonstrate a sophisticated level of analytic and research skills in social welfare policy. The dissertation is intended to generate new knowledge as well as to serve as a learning experience for both you and your fellow students. The process should demonstrate your capacity to combine theoretical, substantive, and methodological expertise in addressing an important social policy issue. The dissertation should be an original piece of research of publishable quality.

## Scope

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The dissertation should foster your intellectual interests. Within the broad context of social policy, you may focus on any substantive area and select any theoretical and methodological approach in keeping with the background and expertise of Heller faculty and their capacities to direct and evaluate the work as well as your capacity to do it. Whatever the topic, all dissertations must meet the standards for dissertations as described below. Heller dissertations have traditionally followed a monograph format. An alternative format is now available, whereby the student instead prepares three papers of publishable quality. This option is described in Appendix 7.

## Establishing the Dissertation Committee

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The committee normally has four members, one of whom serves as chair. The chair must be on the Heller faculty and may be chosen from the following groups: Scientist, Senior Scientist, Social Scientist, Senior Social Scientist, Distinguished Scientist, Fellow, Senior Fellow, Distinguished Fellow, Assistant Professor/Research Professor, Associate Professor/Research Professor, Professor/Research Professor, Professor of the Practice, Senior Lecturer and Affiliated Faculty (see Appendix 1).

An adjunct lecturer, adjunct professor, senior research associate, or Brandeis faculty member from a department other than the Heller School may serve as chair with approval of the faculty. At least one member, in addition to the chair, must be on the Heller faculty and at least one member must be outside the Heller faculty. The outside member may be either from other departments or schools at Brandeis or outside the University. All members of the committee must have a Ph.D. degree or an equivalent terminal professional degree, although the Director of the Ph.D. Program may waive this requirement when a potential committee member has demonstrated a capacity to do research or to be helpful in supervising a dissertation. All members of the committee must be present for the dissertation proposal and defense hearing, so in selecting an outside member, you should be sure he or she will be able to be in Boston at the times you plan to have your hearings. If needed, The Heller School will provide funds up to \$500 to cover the transportation costs of an out-of-town committee member to come to Boston for the proposal hearing or dissertation defense.

Students sometimes want to add a fifth person to the committee in order to have the benefit of additional expertise. This is discouraged. It is difficult enough to coordinate four people's schedules and get four people to comment on drafts. You can ask additional advisors for specific help when you need it without putting them on your committee.

In selecting your committee members, consider how each member will contribute theoretical, methodological, and substantive expertise. No less important are the non-intellectual factors: Can you work well with the person? Can you and she/he communicate clearly with each other? Is there at least one person on your committee who can give you emotional support?

We encourage students to talk with faculty in exploratory conversations about possible dissertation topics. Remember, a conversation is not a commitment to having someone on your committee, and we expect everyone to do a great deal of exploring. Also, these conversations are a way for you to entice faculty members to take an interest in your work. You are encouraged to begin discussing potential dissertation topics and doing preliminary work as early as you wish.

**However, formal appointment of the dissertation committee and presentation of the dissertation proposal may be done only after you have successfully completed all coursework and the comprehensive paper.**

Once you have chosen your committee and obtained each member's verbal agreement to serve, write a letter to the Director of the Ph.D. Program stating: 1) your thesis topic; 2) what style dissertation you will be writing, monograph style or three publishable papers on related topics (see Appendix 7); 3) a brief general statement of the theoretical framework, type and expected source of data, and methods of analysis; 4) the names of members and the chair; and 5) a short description of how each member's theoretical, substantive, and/or methodological expertise is relevant to your topic (see Appendix 2). You should provide extra information and a vita on the outside person. If there are any questions about your committee, the Director will discuss the issues with you and your chair, and perhaps suggest changes. It is the Program Director's responsibility to ensure that the background and expectations of the chair and other members of the committee are adequate to provide informed guidance and to evaluate your work. We also expect you to be prepared in the methods (quantitative, qualitative, survey, case study) that you are proposing. Committee approval will be filed in your student record.

**It is important to formalize your committee as soon as you have it established. The evaluation of the composition of your committee is done separately from your proposal hearing approval and should take place well in advance (at minimum, two months).**

### **Preparing the Proposal**

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A research proposal should include a clear statement of the issue or research question to be investigated; a literature review that illustrates command of the knowledge relevant to the dissertation topic; a detailed statement of the research design or structure of activities that will be used in the investigation; a description of the study population, when appropriate, and of your sampling procedures; sources and methods of data collection or means for accumulating evidence; and the plan for analysis of the data or evidence. If a student is proposing to write a

three-paper dissertation, certain additional requirements must be met (see Appendix 7). The proposal should also make clear the policy relevance of the issue that is being addressed. If the research involves interviewing people or otherwise using people in any kind of demonstration or experiment, you will need to complete the appropriate forms for review by the Brandeis University Committee on the Protection of Human Subjects and append them to the proposal. Complete instructions and the appropriate forms can be found at <http://www.brandeis.edu/ora/compliance/irb/>. The office of Sponsored Programs at Bernstein-Marcus can answer any questions you may have. You should discuss with your Chair when to submit your application to the Committee on Protection of Human Subjects.

Additionally, you should write a 350-word structured abstract (about 1 or 1 and ½ pages). The abstract must include the names of the members of your committee and the date, time, and place of your hearing (see Appendix 3). The abstract serves several purposes. It forces you to state your research problem and research strategy succinctly and so helps you focus and clarify your thoughts. Many funding agencies require a one-page abstract. Finally, the abstract will be distributed to the Heller community and will foster intellectual discussion of your work.

A format that may serve as a guide for writing the proposal is:

- abstract
- introduction
  - overview
  - background: why this area of concern?
- literature review specific to your analysis
  - theoretical approaches
  - previous findings
- theoretical framework
- research plan: research question, data sources, methods
- policy relevance
- references

The length and specific format of your proposal will depend on your topic and the nature of your research. In general, it will probably take a minimum of 20 - 25 pages to accomplish the objectives of a research proposal, but some types of research require longer proposals.

The proposal may be submitted any time after your committee has been appointed. You will undoubtedly do several drafts of a proposal and build up to the final version through much discussion with your committee. Your chair will give you guidance about when you will be ready to schedule a proposal hearing, and you should take it upon yourself to get clear guidance from all of your committee members about what modifications your proposal needs in order to be approved.

## **The Proposal Hearing**

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Once you have received a verbal approval from your committee members that your proposal is

ready to defend, you should schedule a hearing. Scheduling the hearing involves the following steps:

1. Clear a date and time with the members of your committee.
2. Reserve a meeting room and laptop (if needed) through the PhD Program Office (Debbie DeWolfe at ddewolfe@brandeis.edu) **At least three weeks before the hearing**, request the proposed date, time, and place of the hearing in a letter to the Director of the Ph.D. Program (see Appendix 4). Include an electronic copy of your abstract, which has been approved by your chair. Hearings may not proceed without approval by the program.
3. Provide one electronic copy of your proposal and abstract to all members of your committee and the Ph.D. Program Office at least two weeks prior to the hearing.
4. Proposal hearings are academic events. Please do not provide refreshments for the committee and guests during your hearing. Food can be shared after the hearing has concluded

An announcement will be placed in the Heller Bulletin and copies of your abstract will be distributed to the Heller community by email.

All members of the committee are required to be physically present for both the proposal hearing and the defense. This rule is deemed to be in the best interests of both the student and members of his or her committee, to promote a clear and effective exchange of views.

In the case of an unusual circumstance, a student must request permission in writing from the Director of the Ph.D. Program to allow one member of the committee to participate in the hearing remotely (telephone or video conference).<sup>1</sup> Upon deciding this request, the Director will take into account the reason(s) why the person cannot physically attend, any special reasons why the non-attendance would significantly impact the hearing and/or the dissertation process, and the role played by the member in guiding the research and/or judging the outcome (e.g., being "chair" of the committee). The costs of travel related to the member's being at the meeting will not be sufficient reason for granting such a request. Moreover, approval of such requests does not obligate the Heller School or Brandeis University to make the arrangements for or to pay the charges related to the teleconferencing -- both of which are the responsibility of the student.

Proposal hearings and dissertation defenses are open to all students and faculty of the Heller School. Hearings are an opportunity for intellectual discussion and engagement for the whole Heller community, and students as well as faculty not on the committee are encouraged to attend these meetings. The student who is defending his or her proposal is certainly entitled to invite colleagues who share an interest in the topic, but at the same time, no one should feel they need an invitation in order to attend. It is usually inappropriate to bring family members to these

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<sup>1</sup>Students are expected to provide (as feasible) persons participating by remotely all relevant written materials (dissertation, special handouts, etc.) prior to the hearing.

hearings, as they are educational, not social, events. The proposal hearing also serves as a forum for faculty evaluation of the student's proposal and his or her understanding of the research design issues. To serve this purpose along with the general educational function for the School, the hearing needs to observe certain formalities of procedure. Your committee chairperson chairs the hearing. Committee members might want to meet privately for a short time without the student before the hearing begins. Once the hearing is begun, the committee members will take as much time as they need to discuss the proposal with the student. When the committee is satisfied that it has covered all the relevant material, the chair will open up the discussion to others in the audience attending the hearing. When the discussion is over, the chair will ask everyone to leave the room except for the members of the committee, so that they may have a confidential discussion evaluating the proposal. Following that discussion, they will meet again with the student to communicate their assessment and decision. It is at the discretion of the chair, in consultation with the student, whether the committee will meet privately with the student for that final discussion or whether the larger audience should be invited.

At the end of the hearing, the committee will make one of five recommendations: (1) approved; (2) action deferred pending minor revisions and chair approval; (3) action deferred pending major revisions and full committee review; (4) action deferred pending major revisions and a second hearing of the full committee; and (5) rejected. In most cases, your committee will not let you go into a hearing unless the members think your proposal will be approved and you are ready to defend it. Occasionally, new but minor problems come to light in the discussion of the hearing, so that appropriate revisions are necessary. Occasionally, too, students are not willing to hear their committee's advice; insist on going forward with a hearing; do not communicate with each member of the committee; are not able to design a research project that meets professional standards; or fail to demonstrate sufficient understanding of their research design in the hearing. In these rare cases, the committee will reject the proposal and talk privately with the student about how to proceed. If committee members believe, on the evidence of the proposal and hearing, that a student is incapable of designing and carrying out a dissertation in a reasonably independent manner, they counsel the student to leave the program, and will put a copy of a letter to that effect in the student's file.

If action is deferred pending minor revisions, these revisions must be approved by the chair and do not need to go back to the whole committee. If, however, the revisions pertain to the expertise of, or are requested by, another member of the committee, the committee may agree to let that person read and approve the revisions on behalf of the committee. You do not need to have another full hearing. If the committee defers action pending major revisions, the entire committee will read these revisions, or will decide whether you will be required to have another full hearing when you have completed the revisions.

If you are asked to do either minor or major revisions (options 2 or 3), you must complete these revisions in an acceptable manner within **six months** after the hearing. If revisions are required and you do not complete them within six months, you will be required to have a second hearing or defense before the full committee. In cases of compelling personal circumstances, such as childbirth or major illness, you may be given an extension. You should request such an extension in writing from the Director of the Ph.D. Program.

The committee records its decision, along with any required revisions, on a special form that goes into your student record (see Appendix 5). This form is generated by the Ph.D. Program Office and should be picked up by the student prior to the proposal hearing. Upon acceptance of the proposal (in its revised form if necessary), you will be admitted to candidacy for the doctoral degree.

## Writing the Dissertation

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Scholars have many different styles of working and collaborating, and for that reason, it is impossible to describe any single process for writing the dissertation and working with your committee. Some people will work most closely with the chair; others will work equally with all members. Some will write most or all of a draft before showing it to the committee; others will want feedback at every step. Some faculty like to see earlier drafts with their comments alongside the most recent draft, as a quick way to focus on the changes you were asked to make. The important thing is to write drafts and to solicit help and critiques in ways that work well for you, and to communicate clearly with your committee members about your and their expectations.

Be solicitous of your committee members' time. Try to give them advance notice when you will be submitting chapters or entire drafts. Tell them what your time frame is, and discuss openly when you can expect to receive comments back from them.

As with the proposal hearing, your chair and committee will advise you when they think you are ready to defend your dissertation successfully. Because finding a meeting time for four busy committee members is often difficult, your committee members may want you to tentatively schedule a defense before they have given you formal approval, just to reserve the time. However this tentative date should be scheduled to allow plenty of time for review and revision, and should be considered subject to change. Ideally, your defense should be scheduled so that there is time for two cycles of committee review of full drafts of your dissertation. Work forward from the date when you can give the committee a full draft of your complete thesis; this should be your penultimate draft. Add a minimum of four weeks for committee comment and at least another three weeks for you to revise the penultimate draft in response to their comments. You may begin the formal process of scheduling a defense when you submit this revised final draft, at least three weeks before the defense date. It is advisable to ask each committee member whether the draft is acceptable before you proceed.

Scheduling dissertation defenses involves the following steps:

1. Clear a date and time with the members of your committee (as noted above, this should probably be done well in advance, with plenty of lead time).
2. Reserve a meeting room and a laptop (if needed) through the PhD program office (Debbie DeWolfe at [ddewolfe@brandeis.edu](mailto:ddewolfe@brandeis.edu))
3. At least three weeks before the defense, request the proposed date, time, and place of the



defense in a letter submitted electronically to the Director of the Ph.D. Program (see Appendix 4). Develop a structured abstract of your dissertation for circulation to the Heller community that includes background for the problem, research questions, theoretical framework, data and methods, results and policy implications. The abstract, which should be no more than 1-1/2 pages single spaced, must be approved by your chair before it is submitted with your defense request letter. Defenses may not proceed without approval by the program.

4. Provide one hard copy of your dissertation and abstract to all members of your committee and an electronic copy to the Ph.D. Program Office at least two weeks prior to the defense.
5. Dissertation defenses are academic events. Please do not provide refreshments for the committee and guests during your hearing. Food can be shared after the defense has concluded.

An announcement will be placed in the Heller Bulletin and copies of your abstract will be distributed to the Heller community by email.

As with the proposal hearing, all members of the committee must be present for the dissertation defense, and the Director of the Ph.D. Program will make exceptions only for unusual circumstances. Defenses, like proposal hearings, are open to all members of the Heller community, and the same procedures are followed. At the end of the hearing, the committee will ask you and the audience to leave the room while they confer on evaluating the thesis and any necessary revisions. The committee will either: (1) approve the dissertation; (2) defer action pending minor revisions and chair approval; (3) defer action pending major revisions and full committee review; (4) defer action pending major revisions and a full committee hearing; and (5) reject the dissertation. The Committee will record its decision on the appropriate form and submit it to the Ph.D. Program Office.

If specific minor revisions are required, the chair is responsible for supervising their completion and for submitting forms to the Ph.D. Program Office certifying their completion. If major revisions are required, either the entire committee must approve them or you will be required to have another oral defense. The committee will make that determination at the defense. If you are asked to make either minor or major revisions (options 2 or 3), you must complete them within **six months** of the hearing. If revisions are required and you do not complete them within six months, you will be required to have a second defense before the full committee. In cases of compelling personal circumstances, such as childbirth or major illness during that six-month period, you may be given an extension. You should request such an extension in writing from the Director of the Ph.D. Program.

You must submit a final copy of the dissertation, complete with all revisions and signed by the committee members, to the Ph.D. Program Office and UMI Publisher before you can be certified for the degree. Specific annual deadlines, including submission of completed and signed dissertations, are available at the Ph.D. Program Office and on the Brandeis University registrar's website.

Once you have successfully completed your defense, there are two more steps before you are awarded the Ph.D. degree and entitled to use the designation "Ph.D." First, the faculty of the Heller School must vote to award the degree to each Ph.D. candidate. The Dean or his designee (usually the Director of the Ph.D. program) has the formal authority to review each dissertation and can recommend that the faculty not approve a dissertation that does not meet the school's standards. Second, upon recommendation by the Heller faculty, the University votes to award the degree and confer the diploma. Until you receive the diploma, you should use the designation "Ph.D. expected (month, year)" on your curriculum vita and other correspondence. If for any reason you need official certification of your status before you receive your diploma, you can obtain a letter from the Assistant Dean for Student Records and Enrollment.

### **Independent Scholarship**

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The dissertation must demonstrate your ability for independent scholarly work and represent a contribution to knowledge. The chair and committee are responsible for assuring that the dissertation meets the requirements for independent scholarship. The various aspects of the dissertation project, including the research design, data collection and specification, analysis, and writing will be evaluated by the chair and committee to assure independent scholarship. Each project must be evaluated within its own context. For example, while secondary data can be used, the research questions, data analysis, and discussion must represent independent work. If you have any questions about this requirement, discuss them explicitly and openly with your committee.

**Limit of Candidacy for the Ph.D. Degree for Students Entering the Program as of September 2012**

#### *General Guidelines*

1. All required coursework and the comprehensive exam are expected to be completed within two calendar years from admission for full-time students, and four calendar years for part-time students.
2. The dissertation proposal development, review, and hearing are expected to be completed within one calendar year after #1.
3. The dissertation is expected to be completed and defended within two calendar years after #2.

These guidelines are not intended to restrict the pace with which any student proceeds in the Ph.D. program. Rather, they articulate the expected pace that most students should follow.

#### *Time Limit in the Ph.D. Program*

While the expected time for completion of the Ph.D. Program is 4-5 years, there is a maximum of 10 years allowed for completion, 12 years for part-time students. There is no possibility for extension after the maximum time limit has been reached. Full-time students must defend their dissertations no later than 9 ½ years (before March 1) from entry into the program. Part-time students must defend their dissertations no later than 11 ½ years (before March 1) from their

entry in the program. If any student's dissertation committee requires changes, whether major or minor, the student has no more than 6 months to successfully re-defend his or her dissertation.

In no case can the 10-year time limit be exceeded for a successful dissertation defense for full-time students, nor can the 12-year time limit be exceeded for a successful defense for part-time students. Exceptions to this policy are not permitted under any circumstances.

Full-time students must successfully defend their dissertation proposal, including minor or major changes, within 6 years (before August 31) from the date of entry into the program. Part-time students must successfully defend their dissertation proposal, including any minor or major changes, by 8 years (before August 31) after their entry into the program (August 31). Failure to successfully defend either the proposal or the dissertation within these time limits will result in termination from the program. Exceptions to this policy are not permitted under any circumstances.

### *Actions to Monitor Progress*

Although students are responsible for ensuring that their progress is satisfactory and timely, the PhD program will contact students in writing each year after successful completion of comprehensive exam to ensure that students are fully aware of their progress and of the School's policies and expectations. Students who are not achieving satisfactory progress may be asked to leave the program.

- At the end of the first year following the successful completion of the comprehensive examination paper, students who do not have an approved dissertation proposal are required to meet with the PhD program director and their concentration's chairperson to determine a plan of action. The student will be responsible for preparing a report following the meeting to describe the proposed plan for completion or any other decisions the student has made regarding continued progress. The report will be submitted to the Director of the Ph.D. Program and to the concentration chairperson.

## Appendix 1

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### **Eligibility for Committee Membership** (\* denotes eligibility to chair the committee)

#### *Research Positions:*

- Senior Research Associate
- Scientist\*
- Senior Scientist\*
- Social Scientist\*
- Senior Social Scientist\*
- Distinguished Scientist\*

#### *Program Positions:*

- Senior Program Associate
- Fellow\*
- Senior Fellow\*
- Distinguished Fellow\*

#### *Faculty Positions:*

- Assistant Professor/Assistant Research Professor\*
- Associate Professor/Associate Research Professor\*
- Professor/Research Professor\*
- Professor of the Practice\*
- Professor Emeritus

#### *Special Faculty Positions:*

- Lecturer
- Senior Lecturer\*
- Visiting Professor (any rank)
- Adjunct Professor (any rank)
- Affiliated\*

## Appendix 2

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### LETTER REQUESTING APPROVAL OF DISSERTATION COMMITTEE

Date

\_\_\_\_\_, Director of the Ph.D. Program  
The Heller School for Social Policy and Management  
Brandeis University  
415 South Street/MS 035  
Waltham, MA 02454

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

I am writing to request formal appointment of my dissertation committee for my proposal thesis entitled:

#### PROPOSAL TITLE

The purpose of my proposal is to [short description including a general statement of the theoretical framework, type and expected source of data, and methods of analysis].

Indicate whether the dissertation will be presented as a monograph or as three publishable papers.

I have asked the following individuals to be on my committee:

[List committee members and add a paragraph on how each person's theoretical, substantive and/or methodological expertise is relevant to your topic.]

If this meets with your approval please let me know.

Sincerely,

Your name

**Please note: a vita should be attached for any outside member.**

## Appendix 3

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### **Youth with Mood Disorders in Medicaid: A Comparison of Trends in Access to Treatment between Managed Care and Fee-For-Service**

A Dissertation Proposal Presented to  
the Faculty of the Heller School for Social Policy and Management  
Brandeis University, Waltham, Massachusetts  
By  
Rafael M. Semansky, M.P.P., M.A.

Many changes in mental health treatment patterns during the 1990s have been attributed to the rapid expansion of managed care. Little is known about the impact of managed care on outpatient treatment patterns for youth enrolled in Medicaid. This study focuses on patterns of outpatient care for youth with mood disorders, the third most common category of psychiatric disorders.

This study employs a pre-post design with a comparison group to separate the effects of managed care from general trends in outpatient mental health treatment under Medicaid. Andersen's Behavioral Model of Health care served as the theoretical basis for selecting individual and contextual factors. Research hypotheses were developed from economic theories of firm profit maximization and capitated payment. The study has three principal aims: 1) Determine whether managed care encourages the use of low-cost services and reduces service intensity; 2) Examine whether managed care improves system efficiency by reducing differences in treatment patterns for minorities and rural populations; 3) Explore whether youth with co-occurring mood and substance use disorders experience greater access to services.

The study uses Medicaid enrollment and service data from 1993 to 2001 for Tennessee and Mississippi. Tennessee implemented a managed behavioral health program in 1997. During the entire study period, Mississippi continued to finance mental health care through fee-for-service. The study population of youth (ages 5 - 17) ranged between 8,790 and 15,600 depending on the aim and variable. The analysis uses generalized estimating equations, survival analysis and logistic and ordinary least squares regression, where appropriate, for a variety of dependent variables.

The overall findings suggest that managed care had some effect on a limited number of services. Managed care appeared to have mixed effects on access to specialty mental health services and reduced the proportion of youth that received case management. The exclusion of psychopharmaceuticals from the managed behavioral health contract appeared to increase the use of medication management visits, a proxy for medication use. Most differences in treatment patterns for minority youth, and youth in rural areas, were not reduced following the introduction of managed care. Youth with co-occurring substance use and mood disorders had better access to case management, specialty mental health visits, and combined clinical and pharmaceutical treatment.

Results of this dissertation contribute to an understanding of the impact of managed care on treatment patterns for youth with mood disorders. Treatment patterns in both states, regardless of payment mechanism, were changing, often in similar directions. Managed care appears to have limited effectiveness in reducing differences in access to care for minorities and youth in rural areas. The greater needs of youth with co-occurring mood substance use disorders appear to be recognized by behavioral health providers. Limitations of this study include service use differences at baseline between the two states and the generalizability of findings to other states and disorders.

Dissertation Committee:	Christopher Tompkins, Ph.D., Chair Dominic Hodgkin, Ph.D. Constance Horgan, Sc.D. Craig Anne Heflinger, Ph.D., Vanderbilt University
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Defense Hearing	Thursday, July 1, 2010, 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 pm Heller School, Room 147
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Appendix 4

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**LETTER REQUESTING APPROVAL TO HOLD A PROPOSAL  
HEARING or DISSERTATION DEFENSE [state one]**

Date

\_\_\_\_\_, Director of the Ph.D. Program  
The Heller School for Social Policy and Management  
Brandeis University  
415 South Street/MS 035  
Waltham, MA 02454

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

I am writing to make arrangements for the hearing of my proposal or defense [state one] of my dissertation, which is entitled:

[Insert title of either proposal or dissertation]

I have consulted with my committee, and we have scheduled the proposal hearing or dissertation defense [state one] to be held on:

(day, date)	Tuesday, August 13, 2013
(time)	at 9:00-11:00 a.m.
(place)	Heller School, Room G53

The members of my committee are:

Name of Heller faculty member, Chairperson  
Name of Heller faculty member  
Name of Heller or outside member  
Name of outside member (list degree status, job title, name of organization and complete address)

Thank you for your attention. If this meets with your approval please let me know.

Sincerely,

Your name

Appendix 5

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**THE HELLER SCHOOL FOR SOCIAL POLICY AND MANAGEMENT  
BRANDEIS UNIVERSITY**

**ACTION ON DISSERTATION PROPOSAL**

[Name]

[Title of Dissertation Proposal]

[Date of Hearing]

[Members Present (list affiliation if not member of the Heller faculty)]

Action    1) Approved

            2) Approved deferred pending minor revisions and chair approval\*

            3) Action deferred pending major revisions and full committee review\*

            4) Action deferred pending major revisions and a second hearing of the full committee

            5) Rejected

Comments related to Action (if action 2, 3 or 4 is chosen, please specify changes asked for):

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Chairperson

\* Committee Chair should attach a list of specific revisions required. Failure to complete revisions within six months of the hearing date will result in a second hearing before the full committee.



Appendix 6

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**THE HELLER SCHOOL FOR SOCIAL POLICY AND MANAGEMENT  
BRANDEIS UNIVERSITY**

REPORT ON DOCTORAL DISSERTATION DEFENSE

[Date of Defense]

[Name], a candidate for the Ph.D. degree at The Heller School for Social Policy and Management, has submitted a doctoral dissertation in partial fulfillment of degree requirements. The dissertation is entitled:

“[Title of Dissertation Defense]”

The undersigned certify that they have read the dissertation, and attended the candidate's Final Oral Examination. We:

☐ approve it

☐ defer action pending minor revisions and chair approval\*

☐ defer action pending major revisions and full committee review\*

☐ defer action pending major revisions and a full committee hearing

☐ reject it

Required revisions: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chairperson

\_\_\_\_\_  
Committee Member

\_\_\_\_\_  
Committee Member

\_\_\_\_\_  
Committee Member

\* Committee Chair should attach a list of specific revisions required. Failure to complete revisions within six months of the defense date will result in a second defense before the full committee.

## Appendix 7

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Students may elect to write a three-paper dissertation, as an alternative format to the traditional monograph. The following specific rules apply to the three-paper option. These are in addition to the existing rules laid down in “Dissertation Standards and Procedures”, except where otherwise noted.

### 1. Overview

A three-paper dissertation will contain three papers in academic-journal format, with a brief introduction (about 10 pages) placing them in context. The papers must be viewed by the dissertation committee as potentially publishable, that is, ready or nearly ready for submission to a peer-reviewed journal.

### 2. Eligibility rule

For the student to switch to the three-paper format, this request must be approved by the full committee and by the Director of the Ph.D. Program.

### 3. The proposal stage

a) *Choice of option:* A student planning to pursue a dissertation project in a three-paper format should indicate this in the letter requesting the formation of the dissertation committee. Students may switch between the three-paper option and the monograph at any time during the process with permission of the chair and the Ph.D. Program Director.

b) *Content of proposal:* In addition to the usual requirements, a proposal for a three-paper dissertation must outline the three papers, explaining:

- What question each paper will address
- What method and data source each paper will use
- What general type of journal will be targeted for each paper (e.g. economics, social policy, health policy, evaluation...)

In addition, any authorship issues should be explained, for example if one of the proposed papers will be jointly written with others, or result from a team project. (The aim is to assure that the student has truly identified unique questions and analyses that are distinct from the larger project. This is not intended to pre-specify co-authorship).

It is possible that the design of later papers is contingent on results of earlier ones, making it difficult for students to pre-specify methods or journal choices up front. In this case the committee may view it as sufficient for the student to outline a general analytic strategy for handling different outcomes of initial analyses.

a) *Heller faculty input:* A paper already written before the proposal hearing with no Heller faculty involvement will not be acceptable as part of the proposed dissertation. This rule is intended to protect the supervisor-advisor interchange as an important

component of the dissertation process.

#### 4. Preparation of papers

- a) *Type of paper*: Each paper must report on original scholarship. A paper that solely consists of literature review will not be acceptable.
- b) *Content of paper*: Each paper must also contain the information that would allow it to be read separately and still make sense. Each paper should have its own methods section and its own list of references. In addition, each paper should include a separate literature review focused on the specific question addressed by that paper (in contrast to the single literature review chapter often found in monograph dissertations).
- c) *Format of papers*: Prior to the defense, the student must specify a target peer-reviewed journal for each and format each accordingly (e.g. write more on “policy implications” for a paper aimed at a policy journal, more on methods for a methodologically-oriented journal). This will make it easier for faculty to evaluate publishability.
- d) *Relationship among papers*: It is required that the papers be related to each other, for example in terms of addressing a common question and/or considering a common theoretical and policy context. It is recommended that the papers are also related by using a common dataset or applying a common methodology. This requirement ensures a similar depth of scholarship and attention to the nuanced formulation of meaningful new contributions to social policy research and analysis required in all Heller dissertations.
- e) *Length*: In general, each paper would be expected to be at least 20 double spaced pages, excluding tables and references.
- f) *Co-authorship*: In collaborative research, persons other than the student often make contributions, which would, in some disciplines or journals, qualify them for co-authorship on a paper. For purposes of the dissertation document, these persons will not be listed as co-authors, but acknowledged on the ‘Statement of Contributions’ (see below) and in a footnote on the relevant paper(s). This does not preclude subsequent recognition as co-authors in papers submitted after the defense, depending on the conventions of the relevant discipline or journal and the understandings among co-contributors.

#### 5. Preparation for the defense

In preparing for the defense, the Ph.D. candidate should prepare the following, and distribute them to both the dissertation committee and the departmental reviewer:

- a) *The dissertation document*: This should include the following:
  - An introduction of at least 10 pages that summarizes the three papers

- The three papers themselves
  - A synthetic section at the end that addresses implications for policy, practice and research, in non-technical terms, to the extent not already addressed in the separate papers
  - Any additional material that would not usually be part of a journal article (e.g. a survey instrument), but which the dissertation committee deems relevant
- b) *Statement of contributions:* The student will prepare a statement specifying his/her role and those of others in selecting study questions, designing the analyses, identifying appropriate methods, analyzing the data and writing and reviewing the papers. This statement will be signed by each contributor named. (*For an example, see Exhibit A*).
- c) *Dissemination plan:* This form will specify a target peer-reviewed journal for each of the three papers. For each paper, the student is required to obtain a signature from a faculty member with experience publishing in or reviewing for the target journal (or other similar ones). The faculty member will sign a statement to the effect that in his/her opinion, the paper is potentially publishable in the journal selected. (The form should have all needed signatures by the conclusion of the defense). (*For an example, see Exhibit B*).

6. Evaluation by dissertation committee

In addition to the usual criteria, for three-paper dissertations, the dissertation committee must consider the following:

- a) *Extent of the student's contribution:* The committee should be persuaded that the student played the primary role in the formulation and write-up of the research for all three papers. For example, if a faculty member provided the data, selected the methodology and directed the analyses, the student's role may not meet the required standard of independence.
- b) *Eventual publishability of the three papers:* The committee should only approve the dissertation if it feels that the three papers are potentially publishable, that is, ready or nearly ready for submission to peer-reviewed journals. Faculty endorsement of the Dissemination Plan will be relevant for this.
- c) *Heller faculty input:* A paper already written before the proposal hearing with no Heller faculty involvement will not be acceptable. This rule is intended to protect the supervisor-advisor interchange as an important component of the dissertation process.

In some cases, one or more of the papers may have already been accepted or published by a peer-reviewed journal at the time of the defense. While this satisfies the publishability criterion (b), the committee will still need to evaluate the paper(s) in light of the other criteria.

7. Departmental Oversight

During the first four years after the three-paper option becomes available, the school will exercise some additional supervision of these dissertations to evaluate how well the option is working. This supervision will involve collecting information about experience with three-paper dissertations and reporting back periodically to faculty. The report will include discussion of any problems identified with this option, and proposed solutions.

The Ph.D. committee will develop the specific approach to evaluating this option.

8. Journal submission before the defense

Some students may wish to submit papers to journals before the dissertation defense (for example, if delay reduces publishability of results). This is acceptable but will require the approval of the dissertation committee, after reviewing the paper and the statement of contributions. If the committee feels it necessary, it has the option of holding a ‘mini-defense’ on that/those paper(s) before approving submission to a journal.

[Exhibit A]

### Statement of contributions: Paper #1

Student name \_\_\_\_\_

Paper  
title \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

I, \_\_\_\_\_ certify that I played the primary role in the formulation and writing of this research, which I am submitting as a paper for my Ph.D. dissertation.

My role, and those of co-contributors, were as described below:

Task	Student's role (primary/secondary)	Other contributor (name)	Other contributor's role (primary/secondary)
Selection of study questions			
Acquisition of data			
Analysis and interpretation of data			
Drafting of the manuscript			
Revision of the manuscript for intellectual content			
Statistical expertise			
Other			

Signed:

\_\_\_\_\_ (student)  
 \_\_\_\_\_ (co-contributor #1)  
 \_\_\_\_\_ (co-contributor #2)  
 \_\_\_\_\_ (co-contributor #3)  
 \_\_\_\_\_ (co-contributor #4)  
 \_\_\_\_\_ (co-contributor #5)

[Exhibit B]

**Dissemination plan**

Name of candidate: \_\_\_\_\_

Paper 1:

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Target journal: \_\_\_\_\_

**Faculty opinion:**

I have read this paper and *believe/do not believe* that it is potentially publishable in the above-named journal.

Prior experience with this/similar journals

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Paper 2:

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Target journal: \_\_\_\_\_

**Faculty opinion:**

I have read this paper and *believe/do not believe* that it is potentially publishable in the above-named journal.

Prior experience with this/similar journals

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Paper 3:

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Target journal: \_\_\_\_\_

**Faculty opinion:**

I have read this paper and *believe/do not believe* that it is potentially publishable in the above-named journal.

Prior experience with this/similar journals

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_