

GUIDELINES FOR DOCTORAL DISSERTATIONS IN ENGLISH
(Revised 11/16/07)

1. Before you begin working full time on a dissertation you must **advance to candidacy** – i.e., you must have successfully completed
 - a. eight graduate courses taken after your admission to the PhD program
 - b. three field exams, and
 - c. the foreign language requirement.

If you have completed all of the above requirements ask the graduate secretary to submit a **Recommendation for Admission to Candidacy Form** (ABD form) to the Graduate School. Once you have advanced to candidacy you will need to enroll in English 699 (Dissertation Research) and maintain registration in 699 until you have defended and filed your dissertation. Your dissertation director will be your instructor of record for 699.

2. A **dissertation committee** consists of four full time faculty members: a director, two “inside” readers, and one “outside” member. This applies to both literary and creative dissertations.
 - a. While the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) can be useful in advising you, you are ultimately responsible for finding a **dissertation director**.
 - i. The director must be a full time faculty member of the English Department.
 - ii. Faculty who have taught you in a course or an independent study are most likely to be willing to serve as a director. Don’t expect faculty who have no knowledge of you or your work to agree to direct your dissertation.
 - iii. If you are engaged in writing a **creative dissertation**, you should consult with the Director of the Creative Writing Program about an appropriate dissertation director.
 - b. The **two inside readers** of your dissertation should be chosen in consultation with your director. “Inside” suggests that they are members of the English Department faculty; however, it is possible to choose one of these from another, related department (e.g., Comparative Literature, Philosophy, History, Art History, Theater, Classics). Remember that faculty outside the department may not feel the same responsibility to serve. [It is also possible to choose a committee member from outside the university; however, they must be full time faculty at their university, and you must submit a vita to the DGS.]
 - c. The function of the **outside reader** is to judge independently and to assure the Dean of the Graduate School that the dissertation satisfies Graduate School standards. This reader is from a graduate faculty outside our English Department. You should discuss the appointment of an outside reader with your director early in the dissertation process—well before you finish. Either you or your director can approach this faculty member to make sure he or she is willing to serve. Once the outside reader has agreed to serve you will need to submit his or her name to the DGS. The DGS and the Graduate Dean must approve of the outside reader. [In special circumstances, particularly when a student would benefit from early counsel from a faculty member outside Binghamton, the DGS can petition the Dean of the Graduate School to appoint an outside examiner while the dissertation is still being written. If the nominee is from another institution, the program officer should forward the nominee’s academic credentials, including a vita, to the Dean of the Graduate School to be evaluated.]
3. In consultation with your director you must write and file a **dissertation prospectus**. (Sample prospectuses may be examined in the English Graduate Office.)
 - a. A prospectus for a **literary/theoretical dissertation** should give
 - i. a statement of the intention or purpose of the project and its significance
 - ii. a concise summary of treatments of the topic and of trends in current research, or a summary of the scholarly and critical background of the project;

- iii. a description of the proposed method of procedure and of the scholarly or critical approach (an outline of the presentation or argument would be useful); and
 - iv. a working bibliography of at least 100 scholarly sources. This should include primary and secondary material that you have consulted or intend to consult sometime during the process to determine the relevancy of the source for its actual use in the dissertation.
- b. A prospectus for a **creative dissertation** should give as complete a description of the project as possible—i.e., its goals, structure, and focus. It may contain samples of the creative work in progress.
 - c. a detailed presentation of your theses, of your theoretical approach, and of your prospective research tools (including a limited bibliography).
 - d. A prospectus for a **creative dissertation** should give as complete a description of the project as possible. It may contain samples of the creative work in progress.

The prospectus, signed by the dissertation director, must be submitted to the DGS at least one semester before the actual dissertation is to be defended. Prospectuses are kept on file in the English Department office.

4. While writing your dissertation stay in close contact with your director by submitting **regular drafts** for comment. Also keep other members of your committee well informed of your progress. If you are unable to meet with committee members face-to-face, keep them up-to-date with emails and attachments.
5. The **format** for the final draft of your dissertation must conform to “Guidelines for Preparing a Thesis or Dissertation” in the Graduate Student Handbook (which you will find at <http://gradschool.binghamton.edu/handbook.htm>). This details such issues as the title page, page numbering, and so forth. Read these carefully. Otherwise the Graduate School may reject your final copy.
6. The **final draft** of your dissertation should be ready for all four members of your committee at least three weeks prior to your defense. If your committee members have seen drafts of your dissertation in progress (and had opportunities to comment to you), three weeks should be enough time for a final reading.
7. You are responsible for arranging, in consultation with all four members of your dissertation committee, the **date and time of your defense**. Once you have hit upon a date contact the Graduate Secretary to get your defense on the department’s calendar. The Graduate Secretary will assign a room. If you plan to receive your degree in the same semester as your defense, remember that there are deadlines for final dissertation submissions each semester (these can be found at <http://gradschool.binghamton.edu/graduate/deadlines.htm>).
8. The **defense** normally lasts an hour and a half and is an occasion for the members of your committee to ask questions and to engage you and one another in the final work. You may, with your director’s approval, invite guests or friends to the defense. At the end of the formal defense, the committee members will meet to vote on accepting your dissertation. If they accept the work, they will sign the Recommendation for Award of Doctoral Degree form.
9. **Submission:** Please check the Graduate School’s website for instructions on electronic submission of your dissertation (<http://gradschool.binghamton.edu/handbook.htm>