



UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE

**BIDEN SCHOOL OF PUBLIC
POLICY & ADMINISTRATION**

DISSERTATION PROPOSAL DEFENSE POLICY

January 2021

The following policy has been adopted to ensure that dissertation proposal defenses in the Biden School conform to an agreed upon set of expectations and follow a standardized process that meets the needs of dissertation proposal committees, students, and administrative support and University of Delaware administrative requirements.

Please refer to the Biden School Dissertation Proposal Guidelines to review the expectations related to the content of a dissertation proposal in the Biden School.

Student Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the student to communicate with their dissertation chair to confirm that the dissertation proposal is ready for defense.

It is the responsibility of the student to initiate communication with the Biden School Graduate Services Coordinator to facilitate the logistical and administrative arrangements for the defense. The student, copying the Dissertation Chair, will coordinate with the Academic Support Coordinator to set up the defense for the date and time agreed upon by the entire committee. The Academic Support Coordinator is responsible for making the room reservation for in-person defenses, the student or Dissertation Chair is responsible for creating a Zoom link for online defenses.

It is the responsibility of the student to send an updated plan of study and Advancement to Candidacy form to Tara Schleiniger prior to the defense (see below for details).

It is the responsibility of the student to bring the Advancement to Candidacy form to the defense.

It is the responsibility of the student to provide the final version of the approved proposal to be filed and the signed Advancement to Candidacy form to be filed with the Graduate College, copying the Dissertation Chair and Program Director.

Dissertation Proposal Chair Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the Dissertation Chair to communicate with the student about their determination that the dissertation proposal is ready for defense. It is the responsibility of the Dissertation Chair to note any concerns to the student, the Graduate Services Coordinator, and Program Director, otherwise the defense scheduling process will move forward.

It is the responsibility of the Dissertation Chair to confirm that the committee composition meets University, School, and program requirements.

It is the responsibility of the Dissertation Chair to work with the student to determine a date and time for the defense that the entire committee agrees upon.

The Dissertation Chair is responsible for facilitating the proposal defense (see below for detailed outline of defense meeting).

The Dissertation Chair is responsible for working with the Academic Support Coordinator to confirm that all requirements for admission to doctoral candidacy have been completed, and to facilitate the signing of the Advancement to Candidacy form.

The Dissertation Chair is responsible for ensuring that any revisions agreed upon at the defense are completed, and that the final revised proposal is shared with the Program Director.

Academic Support Coordinator Responsibilities

The Academic Support Coordinator is responsible for working with the student to facilitate the logistical and administrative arrangements for the defense including assisting with the room reservation.

The Academic Support Coordinator is responsible for sending an email message with a PDF of the pre-defense dissertation attached to the entire Biden School community (faculty, staff, and students) informing them of the proposal defense date and time (and Zoom link when applicable).

Current Academic Support Coordinator: Stephanie Patterson, (spatters@udel.edu), temporarily Barbara Vent (bvent@udel.edu) is currently covering this role.

The Defense Process

Dissertation proposal defenses should proceed as follows:

1. Dissertation chair and student determine that the dissertation proposal is ready for defense.
2. No less than two weeks prior to the defense date, the student must email the complete dissertation proposal draft and the agreed upon date and time of the defense to the Academic Support Coordinator. The student must also send an updated [plan of study](#) to Tara Schleiniger (tschlein@udel.edu) and a [Advancement to Candidacy form](#) with Section 1 completed, and the names of the chair and all committee members completed in Section 2 and 3 (but unsigned).
3. Proposal defense meeting occurs (see below for detailed guidance).
4. Upon successful defense of the proposal, the Advancement to Candidacy form is signed by the Dissertation Chair and committee members.
5. The Advancement to Candidacy form is submitted to the Graduate College for approval.

Proposal Defense Meeting

Proposal defenses should be scheduled for a two-hour block of time. Proposal defenses for all of the doctoral programs in the Biden School are open to public attendance. This applies to all DISA, UAPP, and ENEP doctoral students' dissertation proposal defenses. Faculty are able to provide input or commentary. Such input should either be brought to the defense or be directed to both the student and chair by e-mail. Such input is considered part of the conversation and as input to the committee's decision process. The committee retains final voting rights on the document.

Defenses should typically proceed in two stages, the first of which is public, the second of which is private (only attended by the student and their committee).

Public

The public portion of the defense typically proceeds as follows:

1. Dissertation chair convenes the defense when all committee members and the student are present. Welcomes everyone to the defense and introduces the committee members.
2. Student provides present of the main elements of the research project being proposed. The presentations are typically between 25-35 minutes with Powerpoint slides. It is recommended that students share a draft of the presentation with their chair prior to the defense to discuss the organization and substantive content to be presented, and practice their presentation prior to the defense in order to make any necessary adjustments for timing or content reasons.
3. Committee members ask questions and/or provide suggestions and feedback about the proposed research to the student.
4. After committee members have completed their questioning, some portion of time should be allocated to allow for audience members to ask questions or provide feedback and suggestions.
5. Following audience questions, the audience and student are excused.

Private

6. Committee discussion of the proposed research project and dissertation proposal document. Committee makes one of the following decisions:
 - to support advancement to candidacy and approval of proposal as is
 - to support the advancement to candidacy conditionally upon making necessary revisions to the proposal
 - not to support the advancement to candidacy
7. Committee chair or member invites the student to return.
8. Committee and student conversation about proposal and decision and path forward.

9. If no revisions are required, or after revisions are completed, the committee signs the Advancement to Candidacy form.

Public Announcement

The Biden School would like to celebrate your successes. Once you have successfully defended your proposal, please send a headshot picture and the title of your proposal to both the Crystal Nielsen (crystaln@udel.edu) for external communications and Tara Schleiniger (tschlein@udel.edu) for internal communications.

Doctoral Profile

Once a student enters candidacy, we will post a doctoral profile that highlights their interests. Examples can be found here: <https://www.bidenschool.udel.edu/people/doctoral-students>. Students should complete the following online form to provide the associated information for that profile. <https://forms.gle/XhuzCNDw557cTYdw6>