

# Philosophy PhD Dissertation Procedure

## Procedure for the PhD Dissertation

### Qualification for the Writing of the Doctoral Dissertation

To qualify for the writing of a doctoral dissertation, a student enrolled in the Center's program must complete all course work, language requirements, and the PhD Comprehensive Exam. In addition, the student must have settled upon a director of the dissertation who has agreed to this role. Normally the director will be a member of the Center faculty. In extraordinary cases, with the approval of the Director of the Center for Thomistic Studies, a student may have an external director, or co-directors at least one of whom is a Center faculty member. When a student has completed all the above qualifications and settled upon a dissertation director, that director will so inform the Center Director who will then confirm the choice and formally notify the student in writing that he or she is a "candidate for the writing of a doctoral dissertation."

### The Dissertation Proposal

A student must present a dissertation proposal for defense within five semesters after completing all PhD coursework.

### The Dissertation Board

In consultation with the student and the dissertation director, the Director of the Center will appoint two members of the Center faculty to serve as a dissertation board under the chairmanship of the dissertation director. In extraordinary cases, with the approval of the Director of the Center for Thomistic Studies, someone from outside the Center can be appointed. Upon appointment to the dissertation board, each member appointed will receive from the Center Director a copy of the dissertation proposal. Normally, this board will review the dissertation proposal and later act as readers of the completed dissertation.

### Review of the Dissertation Proposal

From the date of the completion of appointments to the dissertation board, the board will be given up to two weeks to read the proposal. During this time the student is encouraged to meet with each member of the dissertation board in order to discover and to remedy any deficiencies individual dissertation board members may find in the proposal prior to the formal dissertation proposal review. At the end of the two-week review period, the Center Director sets a time for the formal Dissertation Proposal Review. This formal review will be an oral interview of the candidate by the dissertation board, in which the candidate answers questions about the dissertation proposal by all three members of the dissertation board. They in turn give their advice and recommendations about the proposed dissertation. This review shall last no more than one hour, at the end of which the members of the board will vote on the proposal. Approval of the dissertation proposal must be unanimous. If any member disapproves, the student will revise the proposal and undertake a second review. If the second review is rejected by two or three members of the board, the student must develop a different dissertation proposal. If only one member disapproves, the student may request that the Director of the Center replace the member who has rejected the proposal with another member of the Center faculty, who then evaluates the proposal and reports the results of his evaluation to the dissertation director for appropriate action. Once the dissertation director has informed the Director of the Center that a three-member dissertation board has approved the dissertation proposal, the Director of the Center will notify the student in writing that he or she is officially qualified to begin writing a PhD dissertation.

## Writing of the Dissertation

Dissertations are to be written in accordance with the Center Style Sheet (Delete the highlighted phrase and replace it with the Chicago Manual of Style). The dissertation will adhere to the maximum word limit of 90,000 words. Beginning with the date of the official notice of the dissertation proposal approval by the Center Director, the candidate has five years within which to complete the dissertation text. At the discretion of the dissertation director, the student can be given a one-year extension of this time limit. Any additional extension can only be given by the Center Director upon the recommendation of the dissertation director.

## Evaluation of the Dissertation by the Dissertation Board

When the dissertation is completed to the satisfaction of the dissertation director, the student will submit the approved text in triplicate to the director. At this point, the dissertation director will distribute a copy to the other members of the dissertation board and notify the Center Director in writing that this has been done. From the date of the formal notification to the Center Director, the members of the dissertation board have five weeks to read the dissertation in full. Delete the following: The Center Director will then call a meeting of the dissertation board and the student so that the board may either suggest revisions or approve the dissertation be sent to the external examiner. Ordinarily the student will revise the text to the satisfaction of the board before the dissertation is sent to the external examiner. In the extraordinary case that one member of the board rejects the text, and good faith efforts on the part of the candidate to meet his or her objections fail, the student may ask, through the dissertation director, that the Director of the Center appoint a fourth reader. If the fourth reader approves the dissertation for defense, that reader will replace the dissenting reader on the dissertation board and the thesis will go forward to defense. Unanimous approval to go to defense—from either the original or revised board—is required before the dissertation can proceed to defense.

## The External Examiner

Once approved by the dissertation board, the Director of the Center, in consultation with the dissertation director, will appoint an external examiner, knowledgeable in the field of the dissertation, from outside the Center and the University of St. Thomas. The external examiner will read the dissertation and submit a brief written report. If the examiner finds the dissertation worthy of going to oral defense, it will. If the examiner does not, the student will amend the dissertation and it will be resubmitted to the examiner. If good faith efforts at emendation fail, then the Director of the Center will appoint a second external examiner, whose decision about whether or not the dissertation can go to defense will be final.

## Public Defense of the Dissertation

Public and oral defense of the dissertation is the only method for formal, final approval of the doctoral dissertation and the granting of the degree. When the dissertation has been approved by the dissertation board, three copies of the text as approved (i.e., containing any revisions required by the dissertation board) are submitted to the Center Director, who then appoints an examination board and sets the time of the public defense. The examination board consists of at least six members: the three members of the dissertation board which approved the dissertation going to defense; at least two other voting members appointed by the Director of the Center; and a non-voting president of the examination board. One of the voting members of the examination board will be the external examiner. At the time and place appointed by the Center Director, the defense of the dissertation will begin with the external reader presenting his report to the examination board in closed session. Then the public examination will begin. It will take not less than one hour, and not more than two hours. At the conclusion of the defense, the examination board will thank the student and go into closed session for discussion and vote. A majority vote in favor will constitute a pass. By majority vote, the

examination board may recommend or require changes in the written dissertation which must be made before the PhD degree is awarded. In the event that the dissertation is failed, a further vote to prorogue the dissertation will be taken. A majority vote to prorogue directs the candidate to make whatever adjustments are necessary, according to the directions set out by the examination board. A prorogued dissertation must be defended within one year. If there is a majority vote against proroguing the dissertation, it is failed with no possibility of resubmission.

## **Submission of the Dissertation**

The dissertation author must provide two paper copies of the dissertation to the library for our collection and must agree to have his/her dissertation digitized.