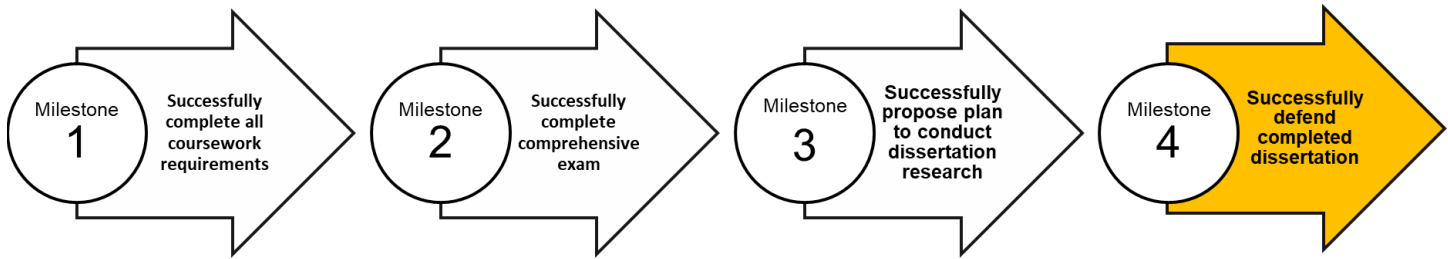


NAME:

## MILESTONE CHECKLIST 4: FINISHING YOUR DISSERTATION



### Step 1: Institutional Review Board Approval

Although you might begin drafting the IRB materials prior to your Proposal Meeting, you should not submit the final application to the IRB until after your committee approves your proposal in case additional changes need to be made. Some things to consider:

- The Full Board of the IRB only meets once a month during the academic year (i.e., they do not meet in June, July, or August). You **MUST** submit your IRB application through PACS by the deadline for it to be reviewed at that monthly meeting. No exceptions.
- You may think that your IRB will be considered permissible as “exempt,” but you may be wrong. Best to assume it will need to receive Full Board review and stick to the deadlines.
- ANYTHING you do that involves human participants must receive IRB approval, including secondary data, surveys, etc.

### Step 2: Data Collection & Analysis

After receiving approval from the IRB office, it's time to do the work. You wrote about it in chapter 3, hopefully with a clear plan for how you'll gain access to participants and what research procedures you'll follow. Stick to the script- your committee approved the plan so that's what you should do.

Oftentimes data collection and analysis can take longer than doctoral students anticipate, so please plan accordingly. Make a timeline for yourself, with estimates for how it will take to conduct the research (i.e., recruit participants, do the interviews, surveys, etc.), analyze the data, and write up the results. Keep in mind that writing chapters 4 and 5 (assuming you're doing a “traditional” dissertation) can go pretty fast, but getting feedback from your chair and other committee members can take several weeks.

### Step 3: Preparing the Final Chapters

If you haven't already, make sure to **review closely** the Dissertation formatting standards CLOSELY (here) on the Graduate School website. You should follow APA Standards for things like the reference list, tables, and internal citations; however, you will need to follow the Graduate School formatting guide for margins, headers, and the table of contents. **START THIS PROCESS EARLY!** There are no exceptions to the formatting guidelines.

### Step 4: Identify an Outside Examiner

In addition to the three members who participated in the proposal meeting, you will need a fourth person who is designated as the Outside Examiner (please read closely the guidelines in the Graduate School Manual [here](#)). This individual **MUST** be approved by the Graduate School at least 1-month PRIOR to your defense. Please discuss who an appropriate person would be with your dissertation chair. Again, make sure to read the policies set forth by the Graduate School closely. After identifying an Outside Examiner who agrees to serve in this capacity, email the director of the CRA Doctoral Program who will seek official approval from the Graduate School.

**Committee Members:**

	Name:	Email:
<b>Primary Advisor:</b>		
<b>Committee Member 1:</b>		
<b>Committee Member 2:</b>		
<b>Outside Examiner</b>		

**Step 5: Complete the Graduate Application for Degree**

Once you get to the point where it looks likely you will be able to set a Defense Meeting, you should complete the Graduate Application for Degree form in BU Brain ([here](#)). This form requires

you to submit names and emails of the members of your committee, as well as the title of your dissertation. If you'd like your name to be included in the Commencement booklet, you should submit this by the date identified online. Otherwise, plan to submit it prior to your defense date.

**Step 6: Plan Ahead**

Make sure to consider deadlines for when you need to submit the FINAL version of your dissertation to the Graduate School and then plan backwards. Prior to the Defense, you will need to allow time for your Chair and other committee members to provide feedback, which typically takes 2-3 weeks (it's really challenging for a faculty member to find 3-4 hours to read a chapter thoroughly). According to the CRA Handbook: Committee members should receive the dissertation at least a month before the defense, and they should unanimously approve the dissertation draft before the defense is scheduled. Work closely with your chair to make sure you can meet this deadline. Similarly, you will need to allow time for final revisions required by your committee following your defense. All that said, if you plan to graduate in mid-May, you likely need to have your completed dissertation to your committee by mid-March for a defense in mid-April. Again, work with your chair to establish a plan and do-able timeline.

**Step 7: Schedule a Date**

Once you've got an ALMOST completed dissertation, work with your chair and committee members to select a Defense Date and Time. Some things to consider:

- Virtual defenses are still permissible according to Graduate School Policy. This could include all members being virtual or just select members. You should discuss with the

chair and the committee members their preference (and follow THEIR lead. If they prefer to do it in-person then that's what should happen).

- The defense should be scheduled for a 2-hour window.
- ALL members must be present (whether in-person or virtual).
- Make sure important people are also available- your parents, a partner/spouse, colleagues, and friends. Most of the Oral Examination/Defense is a public event and your supporters will be excited to participate!

### **Date and Time of Dissertation Defense:**

### **Step 8: Spread the News!**

Once you have a defense date set, you must share it with [cra.phd@binghamton.edu](mailto:cra.phd@binghamton.edu) - preferably

at least one month in advance of the Defense but not less than 14 days in advance. According to

Graduate School policy, the Dissertation Defense must be a public examination and open to the public. Therefore, once the date is set it must be shared broadly (typically via email on CCPA listservs). When you email the date, please make sure to include:

- Dissertation title
- Committee members, including the Outside Examiner, and their email addresses
- Date and time of the defense
- If the defense will be virtual or in-person

Once this information is received, the Lee Belknap (the CRA Program Administrative Assistant) will

schedule the room or the Zoom meeting. Please note: **due to the public nature of the defense, setting the location (whether it's in person or via Zoom) MUST be done by CRA staff members.**

### **Dissertation Title:**

### **Dissertation Abstract:**



### **Step 9: Prepare for the Defense**

At the start of your defense, you will be asked to share a SHORT (15-20 minutes) presentation on the purpose, research questions, methods, findings, and results. Keep in mind that your committee members have read your chapters (some of them MANY times) so it really does not need to be a long presentation- just enough to provide public members a bit of background and to highlight key findings. Make sure the presentation is prepared in a professional manner!!!

### **Step 10: DEFEND YOUR DISSERTATION!**

Keep in mind the key functions of the defense: to serve as an opportunity: “to respond to examiners' questions concerning the dissertation and to defend the validity of the dissertation.” During the examination, the public and committee members may ask questions about your choices, your analysis, the findings, and your conclusions based on the findings. Committee members will likely also ask questions about your future research aims based on your results- now that you know what you know, what will you do next? The Chair of the committee is responsible for leading the meeting, typically following this format:

- Committee member introductions, along with possibly introductions of public members/guests
- Presentation by doctoral candidate
- Questions from the public
- Questions from committee members
- Doctoral candidate asked to leave so the committee may deliberate
- Doctoral candidate asked to return to share decision

The decision of the committee must be unanimous and is documented in the **Recommendation for Award of Degree** form (online). Please keep in mind that the decision may be that the committee requires additional revisions prior to approval - your Chair will assist with coordinating that final approval and submission of the form.

### **Step 11: Finalize your dissertation and submit it to the Graduate School**

Hopefully you paid attention to Step 3 and followed the guidelines for formatting. Still, there may be additional edits, revisions, and additions required by your Committee. Work with your Chair, pay attention to deadlines, and get this done! FYI- if you have already accepted a position following graduation, completing this step may be a requirement for starting the position or may impact your salary.

### **Step 12: Celebrate!**

You worked really hard to get to this point and you had a lot of support from many people in your life. Commencement is an opportunity to celebrate the joy, passion, and determination that it took to get to this point. While I know it can be expensive to participate in commencement, the experience is priceless.