

## UBCO School of Health and Exercise Sciences: Dissertation Proposal Guidelines

In addition to successful completion of comprehensive examinations, an approved dissertation proposal is required for a doctoral student to advance to candidacy. It is the policy of the College of Graduate Studies (CoGS) that candidacy must be achieved within 36 months of entering the program (barring a leave of absence); however, it is the stance of CoGS and the School that you should aim to complete these requirements within 24 months. Failure to achieve candidacy within 36 months means you must withdraw from the program unless granted an extension by the Dean of CoGS ([see section 8.7 of the CoGS Policy Manual](#)). In the event of an extension, you will be given a classification of “unsatisfactory progress” on the Annual Progress Report ([see section 8.1 of the CoGS Policy Manual](#)) and will be ineligible for any internal awards funded through CoGS (e.g., [University Graduate Fellowship](#) or [Graduate Dean’s Thesis Fellowship](#)) during your final year.

For the dissertation proposal, a written document is required but, at the discretion of your supervisor(s), you may also be asked to deliver a presentation to your Supervisory Committee. The final version of the written proposal should be between 5-30 double-spaced pages and describe all of the studies you intend to include in the dissertation. This means that the proposal will include even those studies you have already completed. The finished proposal must reflect your work but you are encouraged to consult with the members of your Supervisory Committee as you compose the document. That is, show them drafts of the proposal and use their feedback to improve your research plan. Ensure that your Supervisory Committee receives the final draft of the proposal in a timely manner prior to any meeting to discuss approval of the document.

Although there is flexibility in terms of the length and exact formatting (this will be at the discretion of your Supervisory Committee), the final version of your proposal must include information on the following categories (it is not necessary to use these exact headings):

1. **Statement of the research objectives:** This should be brief and to the point. It indicates that you have gone from a general area of interest (e.g., health behaviour change, cardiovascular and respiratory physiology, sensorimotor neuroscience and neuromuscular physiology) to a focused area of research.
2. **Relevance to existing literature:** As an original contribution to knowledge, it is critical to identify how the dissertation will fit within, and can advance, an established field of study. Questions to consider include: What is the history of the field of study? What is the current state of knowledge? What are the current gaps in knowledge? How will your proposed research contribute to an overall understanding of the field of study?
3. **Research methods:** Indicate the kinds of data you will collect and how they will be analyzed. Do the projects require expertise with a particular piece of equipment or a particular interview technique? Indicate that you have the required training to conduct the research or indicate when and how you will obtain this expertise.
4. **Timeline:** Provide an estimate of when you plan to carry out the various phases of your work (e.g., obtain ethics approval, collect and analyze data, write and revise) and defend your dissertation. Be sure to consider non-research related duties such as work as a teaching assistant. Similarly, if you have not yet completed your comprehensive exams, do not forget to factor those into your proposed timeline. Finally, consider indicating scholarships and awards to which you will apply.

When your Supervisory Committee has approved the document, the [Dissertation Proposal Approval Form](#) must be completed, signed, and emailed to the School’s Graduate Program Assistant ([fhsd.graduateprogram@ubc.ca](mailto:fhsd.graduateprogram@ubc.ca)), along with a copy of the written proposal.