
DPA Prospectus and Dissertation Project Procedures and Guide

Dear DPA Students: the below guide is designed to help provide you with assistance and important information as you progress toward producing a prospectus, all the way through the final stages of the dissertation process. Please make sure to review it often throughout your dissertation journey. Remember that you must ultimately fulfill the recommendations of your committee, as well as the requirements of both the Public Administration program and Graduate School. The Public Administration faculty at VSU hope that this will be a fulfilling and productive stage of your doctoral degree.

Important notes:

1) DPA students defend both their prospectus and completed dissertation. The prospectus may be defended online or in person using an online platform hosted by the University, while the actual dissertation project is defended only in person on VSU main campus after approval has been granted by all members of the committee.

2) The prospectus is developed during the semester when the student is enrolled in the Capstone Seminar (PADM 9990) in consultation with the instructor of the course. It is a 30-35 page project proposal containing the following information:

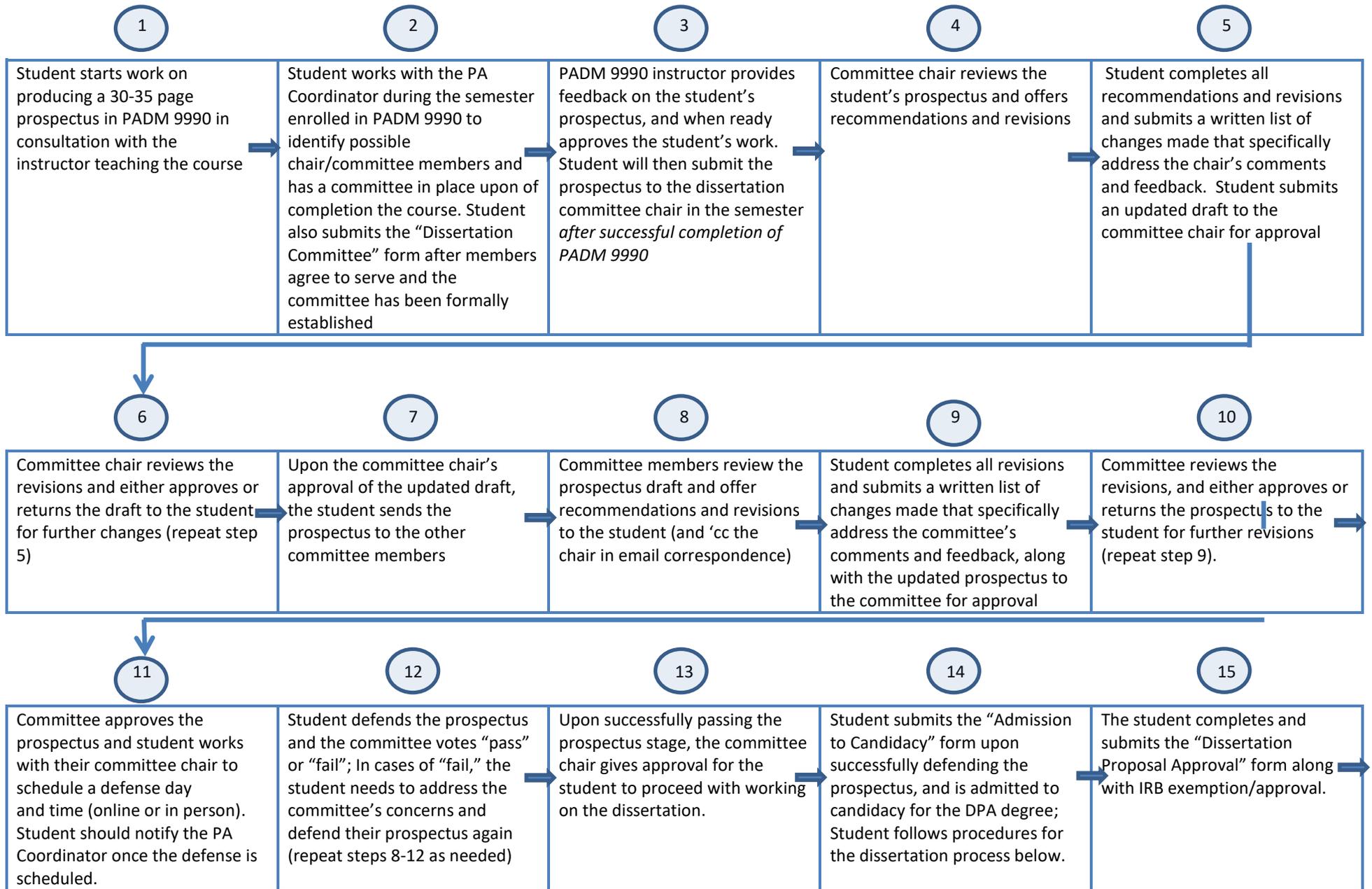
- An introduction of the primary topic and theme that will comprise the dissertation
- The research hypotheses and/or questions of focus for the dissertation
- The relationship of the project to the existing literature and theory in the field
- The basic research approach and methodological design of the dissertation
- Expected outcomes of the research, and how these will add to existing content in the area of study

*** It is essential to emphasize that the prospectus prepares students to begin their dissertation projects upon successful completion of the Capstone Seminar, but ultimately the student's committee will provide recommendations and revisions for the various drafts produced. Students will be required to amend their dissertation chapters throughout the project as recommended by their committee. The instructor of the Capstone Seminar assists students in developing their prospectus as a starting point, while the dissertation committee works on the details and direction of the dissertation project as the student progresses.

3) Students provide their dissertation chair with the prospectus in the semester *after* they have completed the Capstone Seminar, and not prior to finishing the course. Official work on the dissertation project does not commence until the student has completed the Capstone Seminar and a grade has been issued. *Admission to candidacy* commences upon successful defense of the dissertation prospectus.

- 4) The final dissertation project is a major academic undertaking. Producing a high quality project will take a considerable amount of time. A dissertation project will usually require at least 3-4+ semesters to complete. This does not preclude a student from finishing earlier with the approval of the committee.
- 5) Students should not presume to tell their committee when they will be finishing their projects or defending. Public administration faculty do not have a preconceived expectation of when a student should complete their prospectus or final dissertation project. The focus of faculty is to work with students to ensure that a practical and defensible project is produced that follows programmatic and graduate school guidelines. **Students are not to email their committee to tell them they must finish by a certain date or semester.** The chair and committee members will provide their approval for the student to move to a defense after all requirements have been satisfied.
- 6) Students should understand that it is up to the purview of committee members and the chair as to whether a prospectus or final dissertation defense will occur during final exam week of any semester (fall, spring, or summer). Further, it is at the **discretion** of individual committee members as to whether the project is covered in summers. Faculty members use summers to catch up on teaching, research, and travel, and are not obligated to continue work on a student's project. Students must be registered for PADM 9999 each semester that they are working on their dissertation project with committee members (please contact the PA Coordinator for further information).
- 7) As indicated in the steps taken in the dissertation project diagram (shown below), students **are required** to secure the services of a professional proofreader. It is essential that the student's dissertation project utilize proper grammar, spelling, and sentence structure. Students should be prepared to present a brief one page letter from the professional proofreader they selected, indicating the person's qualifications, training, and experience, and their work experience in reviewing student papers.
- 8) Students should be aware that the review process takes considerable time for each draft submitted throughout the process. While some committee members may be able to respond within a two week period of when the draft of a student's prospectus or final dissertation is submitted, other members take longer with the review. Students should not email their committee members to ask if their draft has been reviewed prior to a two week period of time, and after that period, the student may check with their committee occasionally for updates on the process. This is consistent with other colleges and programs at VSU.
- 9) Completed dissertations that have already been defended are to be submitted to the Graduate School according to established Graduate School deadlines. A final version should also be deposited at Odum Library and given to the student's dissertation committee.
- 10) Students should take particular care to ensure that no portion of any draft or paper submitted at VSU has been copied or pasted, or plagiarized in any way. Proper citations and references should be provided.
- 11) In accordance with university policy, all correspondence with committee members must only take place through VSU email accounts and/or internal D2L email, and not personal email addresses.

Steps in Prospectus



Steps in Dissertation Project

