

**SOCIOLOGY DEPARTMENT
DOCTORAL PROVISIONAL YEAR REVIEW PROCESS**

May 2011¹

From 1 June 2011, all PhD candidates are required to take part in a panel review of their progress towards their provisional year goals. The aims of this process are to:

- Assess the student's progress has been satisfactory and the candidate has reached the required standards established by the Board of Graduate Studies;
- To offer guidance and academic support to the candidate in ways that will aid future progress.

The panel review will take place by the 12th month of registration for full-time students and by the 24th month of registration in the case of part-time students.

1. Constitution of the review panel

The review panel will consist of two academic members of the Sociology Department who are deemed to have appropriate knowledge or expertise in the broad field of candidate's research. The panel members will be nominated by the Research Committee in consultation with the candidate's supervisors.

The PhD Advisor (or her/his designee) will convene the panel review discussion and one or both of the candidate's supervisors will also be present.

2. Preparation for the review panel

A meeting date for the review panel will be arranged by the convenor (PhD Advisor or designee). At least two weeks before the review date **the candidate will submit the following documents to the PhD advisor**, who will then distribute them to review panel members. Students should develop these documents and prepare their presentation in consultation with their supervisors.

- **The full thesis proposal**
 - 5000-8000 words;
 - This should be a considerably expanded/revised version of the proposal submitted through the Expression of Interest process prior to enrolment and should provide a substantive argument for the proposed project;
 - It should include: title; problem/question/hypothesis; importance of research topic; review of significant prior research; details of methods and methodology; ethical considerations; plans for analysis of data; research limitations; proposed structure of the thesis; timeline to completion and budget if required.² PhD candidates should seek advice from their supervisors about the information required under each of these headings;
 - Ideally, the proposal will be completed around the 6th month of registration but it will not be reviewed by the panel until the formal review process, allowing revisions to be made before it is formally submitted to the Graduate Centre.

¹ Revised March 2014

² References may be additional to this word limit.

- **A substantial piece of written work:**
 - 5000-8000 words;
 - This will usually be the literature review chapter but may include an introduction chapter or something similar – decisions about which piece to include will be made between the candidate and supervisors.
 - It should be written in ‘good draft’ form, using full sentences and paragraphs and formatted appropriately (plus references).
- **Evidence that Ethics Committee approval has been gained or is in process if applicable** (for example, by providing a copy of the latest communication with the Ethics Committee).
- **The Doctoral Provisional Year Review form**, which includes details of the achievement of provisional goals and future goals.

Prior to the meeting, panel members and the Convenor will review these documents.

3. The review panel meeting

The review process will take place in a **private** meeting room and will last approximately one to one-and-a half hours.

- The PhD candidate will be asked to give a **formal, academic presentation (around 15 minutes)** focusing on
 - the most central and interesting aspects of the research question/problem;
 - the theoretical and/or empirical literature that has informed the candidate’s project to date;
 - how the candidate plans to move forward intellectually.
- The review panel will then ask questions of and offer comments to the candidate about the presentation, proposal, extended piece of writing, progress etc.
- The supervisor/s will then be asked whether they wish to ask any questions or to provide any comment on the student’s progress.
- The candidate will be asked to leave the room and the review panel members will continue discussion with the supervisor/s as to the viability of continued registration for the candidate. Informed by this discussion, the panel members will come to a decision about whether the candidate’s progress has met the standards required by the Board of Graduate Studies. If the two panel members disagree as to the outcome of the review, the Convenor will seek to gain consensus amongst the panel members. Failing this, s/he will cast a deciding vote.
- **The panel members will recommend that the candidate’s registration be:**
 - Confirmed; OR
 - Confirmed subject to minor improvements being made to the proposal and/or substantial piece of writing and/or confirmation of ethics approval. The candidate will be given a date by which to resubmit the document/s to the Chair of the Postgraduate Committee, who will sign off once the document/s are deemed satisfactory; OR
 - Continued on a provisional basis for a period of three to six months, after which the same review process will be repeated; OR
 - Discontinued and the candidate recommended for enrolment in another degree; OR
 - Terminated.

- The candidate will be asked to return to the room and they will be told the recommendation made by the review panel, given feedback on their project/progress and, if necessary, offered guidelines about any improvements in progress that need to be made before appearing before another review panel. The candidate will be given an opportunity to respond or seek clarification.

4. Documentation of review panel decisions

A meeting report will be prepared by the Convenor within two weeks of the review meeting and sent to panel members. This report will provide written documentation of comments from the meeting, indicating how well the student has met their provisional goals and listing any suggestions made by the panel.

Following confirmation of accuracy by panel members, this report will be signed by the Convenor and the candidate and her/his supervisors and PhD Advisor will be sent a copy. The Doctoral Provisional Year Review form will be revised (as necessary) and then signed by the supervisor/s. The PhD Advisor will present the Doctoral Provisional Review form to the Head of Disciplinary Area (or the Deputy Head if the latter is the candidate's supervisor or review panel member) with all other supporting documents.

Once the HODA (or her/his Deputy) has signed, the form and the full proposal will be forwarded to the Graduate Centre. All other documentation, including meeting reports, will be filed at the departmental level.

5. Student appeal process

If the candidate feels the need to appeal the decision made by the review panel regarding their registration status, they must approach the HODA within three weeks of the review panel and ask him/her to review the documentation provided and the meeting report (once completed). If the HODA has any reservations about the review panel's decision, s/he may seek further clarification from the panel and/or the candidate. If the HODA is the candidate's supervisor or a panel member, this appeal review will be conducted by the Deputy Head.

Further channels of appeal are available at the Faculty and University level if the candidate is still not satisfied with the HODA's decision.