

## **Navigating the PhD program in Social Work and Social Research Frequently Asked Questions \***

### **What are the course requirements in the PhD program?**

Students must complete 12 courses. Seven of these are required for all students (counting Data Analysis and Research Methodology as two courses each). Although there is no requirement for full-time study, students are urged to plan for at least one full-time year. Full-time study is defined as three courses per semester. Students may register for four courses in a semester, although this is considered an overload. At least eight courses must be taken in the Ph.D. program at the School. With the assistance of his or her advisor, a student is expected to structure a cohesive program of study by selecting electives to support the student's ongoing research interests. Electives may include courses at the GSSWSR, courses in other BMC departments, independent tutorials, and courses in the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences at the University of Pennsylvania. A complete description of these options is available in the Operating Procedures of the PhD program.

### **What are the options for the appraisal of academic performance in a course?**

At the end of each semester, a course instructor completes the Evaluation of Student Performance for each enrolled student. A grade

of Satisfactory, Marginal Satisfactory, or Unsatisfactory is assigned. A student receives a copy of this evaluation form for each course taken. A student who receives a grade of "Unsatisfactory" in a required course must repeat that course at his or her own expense. A student who receives an unsatisfactory grade in an elective course receives no credit for the course and must undertake the same course or a different elective at his or her own expense. Students are expected to maintain a level of course work equal to a grade of B or better; that is, in the two highest categories of performance on the criteria for evaluation. Please consult the Operating Procedures of the PhD program to review the school's policy regarding conditions under which students are asked to leave the program based on cumulative problems with satisfactory performance in coursework.

Under what conditions is a grade of "temporary incomplete" given?

The grade of "temporary incomplete" is reserved for serious illness or emergency situations. In case of illness, medical documentation must be provided to the Dean's Office. Temporary Incompletes are to be completed within 30 days of the end of the semester in which the "incomplete" is incurred. The end of the semester is defined as the end of exam week for the semester in question. After

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30 days, any remaining incompletes become permanent and no degree credit is granted. Student requests for exceptions to this policy are to be submitted in writing to the Dean and will be considered by a committee comprised of the Dean, the Director of the PhD program, and the student's advisor.

### **When can a student apply for candidacy?**

Before taking the Preliminary Examination, the student must be accepted for candidacy. Application forms are available from the Dean's Administrative Assistant. Students usually apply for candidacy as they near the end of their coursework. The student takes the initiative in applying for candidacy. The application is made to the Doctoral Committee through the advisor sufficiently in advance of the desired time for the examination to allow time for the various intervening steps to take place. In order to take fall preliminary exams, the student must be accepted for candidacy by the end of March of the previous academic year. In order to take spring preliminary exams, the student must be accepted for candidacy by the end of the October of the prior semester.

### **How do I form a supervising committee?**

Students take the initiative in seeking out a Director of Work. The choice of a Director of Work occurs by mutual agreement between the student and the faculty member in question.

The student may suggest the other members of the Supervising Committee and the Dean will consider a student's indicated preferences in making such assignments. The student must make an appointment with the Dean of the School to discuss such preferences. Committees must be constructed to represent faculty strength in the area of the dissertation, to cover the areas of the preliminary examination and to equalize faculty workload, with the final determination made by the Dean.

### **What are the different parts of the preliminary examination?**

The Preliminary Examination consists of written examinations in four areas and an oral examination that covers all of these written components. The four exams include: Social Work and Social Welfare: Past and Present, Social Research, Social *or* Behavioral Sciences Theory, and Social Work Practice: Theories, Research and Issues. The first three are timed essay examinations which shall not exceed four hours in length. The fourth examination (Social Work Practice) is known colloquially as the "preliminary paper" because it takes the form of a lengthy essay. The preliminary paper is part of each student's preliminary examination. Please consult the Operating Procedures of the PhD program for more in-depth discussion of each aspect of the preliminary examinations.

**When are the preliminary exams offered?**

The Preliminary Examination is given during two periods in the academic year, with starting dates determined according to the current Academic Calendar. The fall exam period is usually in late October or early November. The spring exam period usually is in mid-March. The dates of the Preliminary Examination are not flexible. Students must take the preliminary examinations within 18 months of finishing their coursework.

**When is my dissertation proposal due?**

Dissertation proposals must be submitted and defended within one year of successful completion of the Preliminary Examination. See the Operating Procedures for a more complete discussion of this timing.

**Does my proposal need to be reviewed by the IRB?**

Yes!! No dissertation research may begin until the project has been reviewed by the Bryn Mawr College Institutional Review Board (IRB) for compliance with requirements for the protection of human subjects in research. The Supervising Committee must approve the

proposal before it is submitted to the Institutional Review Board.

**What is the overall time frame for completing the program?**

There will be a maximum of 8 years allowed to complete the program within the timeframes outlined below. While students can take the maximum amount of time for some of these periods, they cannot take the maximum amount of time for all of these periods. The maximum time indicated on the chart below refers to the completion of that phase of work e.g. the dissertation proposal must be defended and accepted within 12 months of passing the preliminary examination. Students will be allowed up to two years of leave from the doctoral program. The two years can be used at any point in the process of doctoral studies, but no more than two years can be used for this sort of leave. No leaves will be given merely to extend the time period for completing work. If a student fails to complete any given part of the program in the maximum amount of time allowed, that student will be removed from the Ph.D. program.

<b>Beginning Period</b>	<b>Ending Period</b>	<b>Normal time</b>	<b>Maximum time</b>
Start the program	Ending course work	2-3 years	4 years
Ending course work	Passing all Preliminary exams	6 months	18 months
Pass Preliminary exams	Dissertation Proposal	3 to 9 months	1 year
Dissertation Proposal	Dissertation Defense	2 to 3 years	4 years

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