

PERF MA - GUIDELINES FOR RESEARCH PROSPECTUS

I. DESCRIPTION

All MA students are required to submit a research prospectus at the end of their first year. As the term indicates (from *pro-* 'forward' + *specere* 'to look'), the prospectus is an opportunity for students to delineate research questions, become familiar with the relevant literature, and to devise a strategy and timetable for data-collection.

Students will work on their prospectus with the assistance of a graduate advisor (or supervisor). They should choose an advisor by the end of the first semester, in consultation with the Director of Graduate Studies. Students should meet the advisor regularly to discuss research interests and devise a coherent and cohesive research plan. Students should discuss with their advisor which track to pursue in the program ([Thesis](#), [Comprehensive Examination](#), or [Performance & Portfolio](#)).

II. COMMITTEE

The student's Prospectus Committee will consist of the graduate advisor and the Graduate Committee. The Prospectus Committee is chaired by the Director of Graduate Studies.

III. FORMAT

The prospectus should have 5000-7000 words and include the following sections (organized at least roughly in this order):

- *Project Description* -- clearly state your research *question* (what you want to clarify/understand); briefly describe the scope, context, methodology, and significance of the project
- *Literature Review* -- sources you have explored and how your research fits within a larger field of study
- *Methodology* -- what type of research data you will collect, and how, why, when, and where you will do that; have other authors collected similar data in a similar way?
- *Conclusion* -- summarize the project; reemphasize its uniqueness/originality/ contributions to knowledge and its significance/relevance to performance studies and other disciplines or fields/subfields.
- *Timetable* -- for each part of your research process (*from data gathering to thesis defense and submission*), state what you will be doing, where you will be doing it, and the time frame in which you will be doing it.
- *Chapter outline* -- envisage the organization of your argument in the thesis document. Remember that at this stage your argument is tentative at best — nothing more than a *qualified* (i.e. based on what you know so far) answer to your research question.
- *Bibliography*
- [IRB Compliance Statement](#) (if applicable)

IV. ORAL DEFENSE

1. Student gives a short (5-minute) presentation of his/her project.
2. Graduate Committee (excluding the advisor) asks a round of questions.
3. Student leaves the room.
4. Graduate Committee votes on the written prospectus and the oral examination
5. Committee discusses the prospectus and oral defense, identify necessary revisions (if any), and votes on pass/fail:

Score	Description
1	Pass with no revisions (or minor revisions such as formatting or grammar)
2A	Pass with revisions to be approved by the supervisor
2B	Pass with revisions to be approved by the committee
3A	Fail with revisions
3B	Fail

6. Student comes back into the room.
7. Supervisor informs the student of requested revisions (if any) and of pass/fail decision:

Description	Action
Pass with no revisions	Student advances in the program as an MA Candidate
Pass with revisions to be approved by the supervisor	Student submits revisions to his/her supervisor in order to advance him/her in the program as an MA Candidate.
Pass with revisions to be approved by the committee	Student submits revisions to his/her committee members in order to advance him/her in the program as an MA Candidate.
Fail with revisions	Student revises the prospectus and schedules a second oral defense, in consultation with his/her supervisor and Director of Graduate Studies.
Fail	Student is asked to withdraw from the MA program.

8. The defense concludes.