
PhD Music Dissertation and Dissertation proposal

PhD dissertations proposals are completed in the Fall of year 4. Approval is required from the supervisory committee, the GPD, and finally the Dean of FGS.

A checklist for dissertation proposals

- title, the name of the supervisor and the supervisory committee
- a statement on the purpose of the dissertation research
- relationship to existing literature in the area
- contribution and advancement of knowledge in the field
- methodology and nature of research
- chapter outlines with summary of content
- working bibliography, discography, or other sources
- total length should be approx. 3000 words

Guidelines for the dissertation (format, ethics, technical requirements) on the FGS site:

<https://www.yorku.ca/gradstudies/students/current-students/thesis-and-dissertation/doctoral-dissertation/>

The dissertation itself is the culmination of the PhD student's research. The final document is critiqued by the supervisory committee and in its final form presented at a defense. The defense panel includes the supervisory committee, and external examiner from outside the department, and an additional panel member who is outside the music department, or at arm's length to the candidate. The defense is a public, oral examination that includes a presentation by the candidate, followed by questions from each of the panel members. The panel votes on the outcome of the defense, and any revisions are overseen by the supervisor.

A full description is found under 'Oral Examination' on the FGS website

<https://www.yorku.ca/gradstudies/students/current-students/thesis-and-dissertation/doctoral-dissertation/>

[PhD Dissertation proposals and final dissertations are adjudicated at both Program and FGS level.](#)

PhD Dissertation Proposal Checklist

(adapted from a document drafted by Louise Wrazen, Fall, 2013)

Provide title, your name, supervisory committee and date submitted.

- Double-space text in 12-point clear/standard font; no spaces between paragraphs
- Make sure pages are numbered
- Use *Chicago Manual of Style* (note-bib or author-date system: the former is generally used in historical musicology and the latter in ethnomusicology).
- Include a significant bibliography/reference list; discography if appropriate
- Write clearly and concisely, and be accurate.

Introduction and orientation. Introduce your topic and its scope with sufficient background and clarity in order for a non-specialist to understand it.

Purpose of the research; aims and objectives. These can be framed as questions, given that you are yet to undertake the research. Try to frame a hypothesis: something you are going to “prove”. You are not just writing a narrative “about” something, e.g. a history of music in Fascist Italy; you have an argument that you are going to present, explore and ultimately (we hope) validate.

Literature Review. CBC = complete bibliographical control. Try to annotate bibliography as you accumulate it in preparation for this stage (and for when you write the actual dissertation). Provide a summary of the relevant literature, and position your research in relation to it. Are you filling a gap? Also establish how you are contributing to it: what are you saying that is new, or provides a different perspective? How is your research original?

Methodology. How will you proceed with your research? Does it involve fieldwork, interviews, archival/music manuscript work, transcription and analysis, detailed historical research using primary sources, recordings etc? Isolate and discuss issues specifically. Be clear on the relevance of each source to your research, tying back to the hypothesis. If possible, give some idea of your timeline: some archives might be distant or take a lifetime to get through; there may be copyright issues in getting hold of the material, so it’s important to provide strategies for managing such obstacles.

Theoretical framework, paradigms, and influences. Introduce the issues that emerge as most important to your research (e.g., nationalism; identity construction; gender; performance; tradition and revival; intertextuality; semiotics etc) and demonstrate a knowledge of the major works/authors. For historical work identify various approaches and interpretations. Be sure to include relevant music scholars who have contributed to the discussion, and how your research fits in. If you have one particular influential scholar in mind (e.g., Bourdieu. usually in ethno dissertations) be specific as to how your research relates to his theories.

Chapter overview. Present a provisional breakdown of the chapters of your dissertation. This does not need to be a long section, but be sure they relate to the questions, paradigms and issues identified in the previous sections in order to construct a convincing narrative. Construct a conclusion based on your hypothesis.