

Anthropology PhD Program Requirements Explained

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There are several steps involved in successful progression toward your PhD in Anthropology at Western. These steps, in loose chronological order include:

1. The selection of a supervisory committee
2. Completion of coursework (5 credit courses, 4 terms in Research Seminar)
3. Qualifying examinations (research statement, written qualifying exams, oral defense)
4. Language requirement
5. Thesis proposal and proposal hearing
6. Research and analysis
7. Presentation of your research results to the Research Seminar
8. Writing the dissertation
9. Thesis examination

1. The selection of a supervisory committee: All students are assigned an interim faculty contact when they are admitted to our program, but after a term in the program, students should come to a more formal agreement with a faculty member to supervise their thesis. The PhD supervisory committee generally includes three faculty members – a supervisor and two additional advisors. When appropriate, one of them from a department outside of anthropology. Once the supervisory committee is agreed upon, the student and supervisor should complete, sign, and submit the **Supervisory Committee form** to the Graduate Program Assistant. This is normally done by the middle of January in the student's first year.

2. Completion of coursework: PhD students are required to complete a minimum of 5 one-term graduate courses for credit. Coursework is usually completed during the first year of the program. PhD students must also enroll in and attend the non-credit (audit) Research Seminar for a total of four terms (usually Fall and Winter in each of the first two years, but sometimes may be later if they are away doing field research). To remain in the program and progress to the comprehensive exam phase, PhD students must achieve an overall course average of 80%. They must also have no individual course grade below 70%. If a student receives an individual course grade below 70%, they may be allowed to repeat the course at the Graduate Chair's discretion.

Important: In general, we are concerned to ensure that PhD students are appropriately prepared for their research, so that they will be in a position both to carry it out successfully and to make an original contribution to knowledge at its conclusion. Research projects vary considerably, but some projects (and some students depending on prior experience and training) require additional training in specific methods, statistics, language skills, etc. and all projects require knowledge of broader literature so that students can define where their project fits and what it contributes to existing knowledge. While the coursework contributes to this training, much of the second year in the PhD program is geared towards ensuring that students develop any other skills and knowledge necessary for their PhD research. None of these requirements should be seen as obstacles to the real work of the thesis – they should all contribute to preparing the student for what lies ahead.

3. Qualifying examinations: There are three general steps in completing the PhD qualifying examinations. **First**, students should circulate a 3–5-page statement of interest to their committee members – this statement is an early (and usually briefer) draft of the thesis proposal. Its purpose is to get a conversation going among the student and the members of the thesis supervisory committee about what areas would be appropriate for the qualifying exams questions. This conversation normally happens at a supervisory committee meeting at the end of the second term or beginning of the third term in the program. At this stage, the student & supervisor will submit a **Qualifying Examination Plan form** to the Graduate Program Assistant. **Second**, based on that conversation, three qualifying exam questions will be developed for the student to answer. The written qualifying exam is made up of three 15-page responses to these questions. **Third**, after the submission of the written qualifying exam responses, the student will attend an oral examination of the qualifying exam responses with their committee. After the written and oral qualifying exams process is completed, students and their supervisors must complete, sign and submit the Qualifying Examination Evaluation form to the Graduate Program Assistant.

4. Language requirement: We consider working knowledge of a second language to be an important part of the training of PhD students. Many anthropological research projects require the researcher to interact with people in another language; there is also a significant number of anthropological literatures published in language other than English. There is a range of ways that a student can demonstrate sufficient competency in a second language as appropriate to the needs of their research. Where, after careful consideration, the supervisory committee agrees that a second language is not required for the student's research or accessing relevant secondary literature, it is possible for this requirement to be waived. All PhD students must have a **Language Requirement form** on file with the Graduate Program Assistant, usually by the end of the second year of the program.

5. Thesis proposal and proposal hearing: The PhD thesis proposal is generally developed during the second year in the program. The proposal hearing is a meeting with the student, the supervisory committee, graduate chair, and other faculty members as appropriate. The proposal hearing is a milestone that will be displayed on your transcript.

The PhD proposal is usually 10-12 pages and can be based on, for instance, a Wenner-Gren Foundation Grant application. Students should consult their supervisors to discuss appropriate format, as there is considerable variability in how PhD thesis are laid out.

At the proposal hearing your supervisor should have the participants complete and sign the **Doctoral Dissertation Proposal form** which must be submitted to the Graduate Program Assistant after the hearing.

You should also ensure that you submit your final proposal (after making any revisions suggested by committee members at your proposal hearing) to the Graduate Program Assistant for your file.

Research Ethics: Please remember that students who are undertaking research involving living human subjects must also obtain **Research Ethics Board** approval before beginning their research. A copy of the approval or an expectation of when the approval will be granted, must be included with the proposal. Note that there can be a delay of two months or more between submitting your research ethics protocol and receiving Research Ethics Board (REB) approval. Once you receive your REB approval you must provide a copy to the Graduate Program Assistant.

6. Research and Analysis: PhD research is generally completed by the end of the third year or early in the fourth year, although there is considerable range in how the research may be carried out – one full year of fieldwork, several shorter field trips, laboratory work in several phases, etc.

7. Research Seminar Presentation: All graduate are expected to present their research results to their peers at the Research Seminar. For PhD students, this would usually be in their fourth year. Some students do present earlier, for instance in their third year.

8. Writing the dissertation: The dissertation is generally written over the course of the final year of the program, under the guidance of the thesis supervisor. Western allows either monograph or integrated article format. PhD theses are generally no longer than 350 pages in length and may be shorter. Your thesis supervisor will be able to provide you with guidance on what would be considered a sufficient contribution to knowledge to merit a PhD degree. As you are moving toward completion of your thesis, you must ensure that your timelines include enough time to get detailed feedback from your supervisor on draft chapters and to make revisions based on those suggestions and corrections, which may take several months.

SGPS Thesis Regulation guide: <https://grad.uwo.ca/resources/regulations/8.html>

Note: Since March 2020, for reasons of health and safety to the campus community, SGPS has requested that all MA and PhD Thesis Examinations be held remotely until further notice.

SGPS Remote Thesis Examination Guide:

https://grad.uwo.ca/academics/thesis/examination_guide.html

9. Thesis examination (defense): You should be aiming whenever possible to defend your dissertation in your final term of study. As you begin to plan for your defense, you will need your supervisor to complete the **Doctoral Thesis Examination Request form** (so that the composition of your examination committee can be approved) to the Graduate Program Assistant, who will forward it to SGPS to process. This form should be submitted at least six weeks before the date of defense.

Examination Committee: PhD examination committees include two department examiners (only one of whom can be a member of your supervisory committee), one university examiner and one external examiner. The chair of the defense will be appointed by SGPS, usually from another graduate program at the university. Once you have uploaded your preliminary thesis for examination (allow at least five weeks before the defense date), SGPS will circulate the thesis to the examining committee for review.

The rules governing the examination are presented on the SGPS website:

<https://grad.uwo.ca/resources/regulations/8.html>

Examination Procedure: Approximately five days before the scheduled defense, the examiners must return a preliminary report indicating their approval or disapproval of the form and content of the dissertation. Provided that a majority of the examiners indicate approval, then the defense takes place as scheduled. Prior to the PhD defense, usually earlier on the same day, the student presents a public lecture on the main findings of the thesis. Usually these lectures are booked for one hour, which means the lecture should be no longer than forty minutes, in order to allow time for questions and discussion. If the defense is successful, the examination committee may request minor revisions. Once complete,

the final revised thesis is filed with SGPS for final approval. The program is officially completed once the thesis has been published in the *Scholarship@Western* thesis repository.

Funding and TDO Status: Students who defend after their final term of funding must pay fees for the next term; however, SGPS does have a pro-rated refund schedule for completions part-way through a term. You may be eligible for TDO (Thesis Defense Only) status if you have met all the submission deadlines for the previous term but could not schedule your examination during that term. More information on TDO status can be found on the SGPS website:

https://grad.uwo.ca/academics/thesis_defense_only_tdo_status.html

Remember to apply to graduate in Student Center!

Important: maintain close contact with your thesis supervisor!