

The LPP Dissertation

The Ph.D. dissertation in the Law and Public Policy Program is an original interdisciplinary study of legal, political, and societal dimensions of important issues in society. The interdisciplinarity of an LPP dissertation means that the research draws on ideas, evidence and methodology from at least two fields of study. The term “fields of study” can be interpreted as established academic disciplines, such as law, political science, economics, biology, and health sciences, and recognized subfields within these and other disciplines.

Law refers to jurisprudence, meaning the actions of the courts, litigation, the activities of lawyers in matters of dispute resolution and adjudication, legal documents, including constitutions and statutes, and the sociology of law.

Public policy refers to any rule-making activity or issue falling within the general rubric of governance. Law or public policy, or both, are primary concerns in the LPP dissertation. Administrative practice, including policing activity, usually is considered an aspect of public policy.

Analysis in LPP dissertations is situated in the societal context in which law and public policy is shaped. LPP dissertations should explore the interactions and intersections between dimensions of society and governance (the process and product of the law and public policy).

LPP dissertations must reach a minimum threshold of significance. That is, the problem investigated and its research design must contain sufficient scope and obtain a level of scholarly sophistication that will command the attention of professionals and academicians. Alternately put, dissertations that address issues that have little or no interest to policy professionals or that rest on narrowly construed research designs usually will not satisfy the test of significance. The dissertation should offer the basis for at least two articles in recognized scholarly journals.

Dissertation Proposals in LPP**1. Overview**

The dissertation proposal customarily runs between 20 and 30 double-spaced pages, exclusive of end-matter, such as a selective bibliography (usually 2-3 pages), exhibits (such as questionnaire questions, data parameters, and so on), a projected list of chapters, and a timetable for completion of the dissertation.

2. Components: the DP should include for following sections:

- a. An introduction to the topic (issue, problem)

- b. The research question. The question may be stated as an exploratory query (or a set of questions), or testable hypotheses.
- c. A brief overview of key literature, examined in interdisciplinary perspective, including applicable theory.
- d. Overview of your general research strategy.
- e. Specifics of your research design (customarily 8-12 pages).
- f. The L and the P in the dissertation: how does this dissertation address legal and policy dimensions from an interdisciplinary perspective?

3. Research Design

The Research Design (RD) must be presented in sufficient specificity to allow constructive feedback. The RD should seek to demonstrate the applicability and appropriateness of the research strategy proposed. Citing methodological precedents can help in this endeavor. Consider your DP to be the forerunner of a research grant.

The RD section should address:

- a. The kind of observations do you intend to make. How many observations do you plan to make? If the RD is quantitative, cite the Ns. If the RD is qualitative, provide projections concerning matters such as who will be interviewed, how and for how long? Or specify the bodies of printed materials to be examined. If using secondary data, convince readers that you can gain access to this evidence and that is suitable to testing your hypotheses.
- b. How will you analyze these observations in relation to your research questions, including applicable theory? Provide sufficient discussion to persuade observers that you are using appropriate analytic techniques, given your evidence and research questions. If a quantitative design, describe the relevant variables and statistical routines.
- c. Discuss the extent to which your study will be generalizable. In other words, defend the framing of your research.

The LPP Research Seminar

All PhD candidates in the LPP Program are required to attend the LPP Research Seminar for two semesters. Enrollment in the Seminar uses the pass-fail grading system.

The Research Seminar serves three general functions. First, it provides a setting for students to develop their dissertation proposals. Second, it serves as an instructional arena for the evaluation of research in areas of interest to the Law and

Public Policy Program. And third, the Seminar provides the forum for the presentation of LPP dissertation proposals, in satisfaction of Program requirements.

All LPP students in the PhD Program must prepare a dissertation proposal. The Research Seminar provides a forum in which to discuss procedures and techniques related to developing an original research project for an LPP dissertation, locate dissertation committee members, and write a research designs. The end product of this activity is presentation of the dissertation proposal (DP) to the Seminar, which is open to the LPP community.

The DP presentation takes place after the student's dissertation committee has approved the proposal, including its research design, and the Seminar instructor determines that the DP is consistent with the objectives of the Program. The Seminar instructor writes a Report on the proposal that incorporates the comments and recommendations from discussion about the DP. The Report is sent to the DP presenter, the Director of LPP, the Program office, and the student's dissertation committee. The committee is expected to advise the student on how to respond to the suggestions contained in the DP Seminar Report.