

Handbook for Students

Language, Literacy, and Culture Doctoral Area

2003

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Congratulations! You have chosen a very challenging intellectual path -- a path towards scholarship that will contribute to leadership roles in various educational settings. In this handbook you will find some basic information and advice that will assist you in making important decisions about your doctoral studies.

The Language, Literacy, and Culture Community

The LLC community brings together faculty and students with interests in the areas of first and second language acquisition, ESL, bilingual and foreign language education, reading, writing, children's literature, and multicultural education. We strive to create a dynamic synergy among these areas in order to better address the needs of all learners in a diverse society.

Historically, language, literacy, and culture have been viewed as separate areas of scholarly study, and this has resulted in inadequate conceptualizations and disjointed approaches to learning and teaching. In fact, education in general has suffered from an overreliance on psychological explanations focusing on the individual that fail to take into account the cultural and sociopolitical contexts in which learning actually occurs. Consequently, individual or family characteristics are often cited as the major problems when students fail to learn, with little attention given to broader social and political realities. In the case of students who are perceived as having subordinate social status due to their culture, race, language, gender, or social class, the dilemma is exacerbated.

Instead of a sole focus on psychological explanations for student learning, the Language, Literacy, and Culture doctoral area draws upon and contributes to theoretical perspectives which view culture as central to the understanding of language and literacy and which examine language, literacy, and culture as embedded in sociopolitical structures and processes. We derive our perspectives from fields such as anthropology, sociology, and critical studies in a variety of disciplines in order to reconceptualize language, literacy, and cultural practices as social and political action. Consequently, we define language and literacy as the negotiation of participation in communities, the expression and development of social identities, and the reproduction or transformation of ideologies and power relations in schools, communities, and the broader society.

Defining language and literacy through a sociocultural lens provides common ground for connecting native and non-native language education, literacy education, and multicultural education. It also provides the foundation that enables us to construct language, literacy, and cultural practices that value diversity, challenge and reject discrimination, and support democratic and equitable participation in schools and communities. To achieve these ends, the LLC community shares a number of goals.

LLC Common Goals for Doctoral Study

1) To become aware of the influence of language, literacy, and culture in education through the study of:

- the historic, philosophic, and theoretical foundations of multilingual/multicultural learning and teaching
- a range of perspectives on cultural and linguistic diversity and its role in education
- ways educators can support the development of equitable and democratic classrooms and communities
- ways educators can support language growth in individuals and the development of equitable and democratic language practices in classrooms and communities

2) To gain an in-depth understanding of one or more theoretical perspectives on language and culture, including:

- understanding sociocultural and sociopolitical theoretical perspectives on language and how they are situated in relation to other perspectives
- sufficient familiarity with one or more sociocultural perspectives on language to support close analysis of oral and/or written texts
- understanding a range of perspectives (including sociopolitical perspectives) on culture and the relationship of language and culture

3) To gain familiarity with a range of approaches to research through the study of:

- approaches to qualitative research, with some attention to quantitative approaches
- the relationship among research questions, theoretical perspectives, and research methodology
- historical shifts in paradigms
- comparison and critique of assumptions, questions, goals, methods, findings, power issues
- ability to understand, critique, and explain to others studies based on various perspectives

4) To develop the skills to conduct credible and publishable qualitative research studies, including:

- identifying important research questions based on the literature, one's own experiences, and the experiences of those affected by the problem
- negotiating access and relationships with participants
- conducting literature reviews (including use of library and technology)

- planning and implementing data collection and analysis
- understanding ethical issues involved in research and constructing one's ethical position
- writing research proposals and final reports

5) To develop facility in a range of genres of speaking and writing in the field and to communicate effectively to a broad range of audiences concerning how conceptions of language and culture inform the development, implementation, and evaluation of curricular and pedagogical practices, including:

- knowledge and critical examination of current academic debates across paradigms in a particular literature relevant to the problem(s) the student has chosen and knowledge of how to put forth and defend one's position in these debates
- ability to contribute to advancement of knowledge and the academic conversation in one's specialty
- understanding one's own professional language practices (writing, presenting, teaching) as social, cultural, and political practices with possibilities for transformative action
- ability to write and make presentations in (and reinvent) a variety of academic genres, including those appropriate for scholarly publication and conferences
- ability to critique and challenge existing practices that exclude rather than support learners
- use of theory to ground and critique one's own teaching, advising, or mentoring

6) To develop leadership in one's professional setting, whether in schools, higher education, or other educational contexts, including:

- participation and contribution to the LLC community and to one's professional organizations
- negotiation of sociopolitical contexts in which one provides service
- understanding the varied cultures of colleges and universities and expectations for faculty, as well as the cultures of other professional arenas of interest
- ability to position oneself favorably in the sociopolitical life of one's profession

7) To identify and use one's unique strengths and abilities to contribute to equity in society and sustain professional growth, including:

- identification of career goals and development of strategic and ethical ways to meet goals
- creation of spaces for one's intellectual development within the context of other personal and professional responsibilities
- identification of resources for meeting one's goals in the university and local community, as well as the larger professional community

These common goals inform the courses offered by LLC faculty and provide the foundation for planning your coursework and other activities as a doctoral student. Please review this handbook and consult with your advisor for details specific to your particular interests.

I. Getting Started and Planning Your Program of Study

By now you have received the School of Education Advising Guidelines for the Doctoral Program that present the steps in documenting your progress in your doctoral studies. As well, you have been assigned an advisor whose interests are related to your own. It is essential to meet with your advisor periodically as you make progress toward completing your degree. During your first semester of study, you should review the Advising Guidelines for the Doctoral Program (available from the Office of the Graduate Program Director, Room 123 Furcolo Hall). You should also meet with your advisor to discuss the guidelines and complete Doctoral Form D-1, the first of a series of forms that documents your progress through the program. By being familiar with the entire doctoral process, you will be better able to plan and gather resources necessary to be successful in the program.

Each filing of the forms in the Guidelines is another step towards completing your degree program. Your advisor takes the responsibility of mentoring the early stage of your doctoral studies. Close communication with your advisor will help you identify the faculty to serve on the Guidance Committee which will assist you in formalizing your program of study on Form D-2. This committee consists of three faculty members who are scholars in the areas that are important to your program of study. They may include faculty in Language, Literacy, and Culture, in other concentrations of the School of Education, or other departments on campus. Before you are ready to select a committee and formalize your program of study, however, it is important for you to immerse yourself in the LLC community and reflect on your personal goals for your doctoral studies.

Start with a vision of the future “you.” Think of yourself as a future leader in your field. The program is designed to prepare you to contribute to knowledge in that field. To achieve this goal, you will need to gain a sense of the scholarship in the field from your first courses. Contrast this with your current and past experiences/knowledge/skills to find areas that you want to explore in depth and questions that you want to address in your studies and research. Reflect on how these questions and knowledge might inform the areas of educational policy and practice to which you hope to contribute. This is the first step toward identifying the personal goals that will guide your program of studies.

Participating in the LLC community. While planning your coursework is an important means of meeting your goals (and will be described below), there are many other experiences that contribute to your preparation for leadership in the field. Your peers can be a great asset to you as you move toward your goals. As each year's students make progress toward defining their areas of interest and their research questions, you will see and hear the use of terminology and ideas that may be new to you. Opportunities to interact with peers are provided not only in courses but also in regularly scheduled LLC Community Meetings and special events scheduled throughout the year, and in local, regional, national, and international conferences. These events will allow you to be in contact with emerging ideas and directions in research and provide opportunities to ask basic questions. Participating in these events will give you an idea of the processes that might be ahead of you, inspire you to tackle similar issues, or stimulate further ideas. We strongly encourage you to attend and participate in these activities, as they will undoubtedly increase your understanding of issues in the field and enhance your progress toward the completion of the degree program.

In addition, you will need experiences that apprentice you to the field that you have entered and that allow you to share your expertise with others. These experiences might include serving on the Student Advisory Committee (SAC); teaching or co-teaching courses; presenting papers at conferences; assisting with and conducting research studies; writing proposals for grants, conferences, courses, etc.; mentoring new students; writing book reviews, research articles, and critical essays; and serving on School of Education governance committees. Also, we expect all doctoral students to participate in the LLC listserv (your advisor will let you know how to join the listserv) as doing so will keep you abreast of scholarship and job opportunities, as well as local and regional events related to your scholarly interests. In addition, a number of organizations regularly provide additional opportunities for professional development (scholarships for attendance at conferences, opportunities to interact with and receive feedback from scholars in your field, etc). You should take advantage of these opportunities as they will enrich your doctoral experience. Participating in these activities is a great way to meet others, exchange ideas, and contribute while gaining professional experience.

Planning your coursework. The coursework and other activities that constitute your doctoral program of study will be formalized in Doctoral Form D-2 (found in the Advising Guidelines for the Doctoral Program). Form D-2 is the place where you articulate your own goals for your doctoral program, relate these goals to the LLC common goals (see next section) and School of Education goals (see Appendix A for SOE goals), and outline the courses and other activities you plan to pursue to accomplish these goals. Typically, you will complete Form D-2 by the end of your third or fourth semester of study in LLC. At that time you will form a Guidance Committee consisting of three faculty to advise you and

approve your program of study. However, the process of planning your program of study begins much earlier. This process will involve meeting with your Advisor each semester to discuss your evolving goals and program of study. It will also involve writing several drafts of Form D-2 and revising them based on feedback from your advisor, other faculty, and your fellow students. This section describes the stages of that process.

Your first semester: There is a wide range of ideas that may have attracted you to this area of doctoral study. After meeting with your advisor to review the doctoral process and complete Form D-1, you should move toward a more specific vision of where you are headed by reflecting on the experiences that have brought you to the LLC community for doctoral study and drafting a statement about the topics and questions that interest you, and why. As you take courses during your first semester, reflect on what you are learning about the sociocultural frameworks that inform scholarship and research in the field and consider how they relate to your areas of interest. It takes time to absorb new perspectives and concepts, and they will probably change the way you think about your areas of interest or spark new ones.

Next, think about the types of courses you will need in order to explore the range of ideas that interest you. You'll need theoretical support through courses that will help you think about ways of understanding language, literacy, and culture as they relate to your areas of interest. You'll need courses that expose you to a range of issues using those theories. You'll need to gain some depth in certain areas related to your interests. And you'll need to develop research skills to help you explore your own issues and contribute to the field. Explore the list of course offerings in LLC, the School of Education, and other departments across campus to see what courses seem related to your areas of interest. Ask faculty and other students to recommend courses of interest. Become familiar with the LLC affiliated faculty in other departments on campus and the kinds of courses they offer (a list of affiliated faculty is available from your advisor). And familiarize yourself with the guidelines and course descriptions for addressing the LLC common goals in your program of study (see following sections for the goals and guidelines).

Your second semester: After completing your first semester of study, reflecting on your areas of interest, and reviewing the guidelines for addressing the common goals, it's time to get your advisor's feedback. At the beginning of your second semester of study (or your second year if you are a part-time student taking fewer than 9 credits a semester), submit to your advisor a draft summarizing your thoughts about your scholarly focus and professional goals and the background experiences that are leading you to define your personal goals. You should reflect on the kinds of courses that might help you meet your personal goals and on how the courses you took during your first semester (or year) relate to the common

goals and the questions you are beginning to explore. This is really an early draft of your statement about your background and goals for Form D-2. Arrange a meeting with your advisor to discuss your draft.

Your second year: At the end of your first year of study (or your second year if a part-time student), build on the draft submitted previously to further define your scholarly and professional goals and detail your plan for achieving both the common goals and your personal goals through coursework and other activities. Experiences such as holding a teaching or research assistantship, attending and presenting at professional conferences, leading professional development activities, writing for publication, etc. may all be important ways to meet both the common goals and your personal goals.

Your completed Form D-2 will be unique to you, but it should contain the following elements. You will present these elements in a way that works for you; you do not need to present them separately or in this order (see samples in Appendix B):

- 1) A 1-3 page statement in which you explain the professional and personal experiences which brought you to LLC, your philosophical concerns and commitments, and your long-term professional goals.

- 2) A statement of 3-5 broad goals for your program of study in LLC. What do you hope to learn and/or accomplish through your doctoral program? What questions, topics, and/or areas of study do you intend to explore? How have you pursued these goals so far, and what new goals have arisen to give your program of study a direction?

- 3) A list of courses you have taken and those you plan to take to support the accomplishment of your goals.

- 4) A discussion of the teaching and other professional activities (e.g., presenting at conferences, consulting) you have undertaken and plan to undertake to further your accomplishment of your goals.

- 5) A summary presentation of the relationships among your own goals, the LLC common goals, the School of Education competencies, and your Program of Study. This summary could take the form of one or more charts or grids, or it could be a prose statement. The objectives of this element are to present an overview of your Form D-2 for your readers and to illustrate that your

planned program of study addresses your own goals, the LLC common goals, and the School of Education competencies in an integrated manner.

Share your draft with your advisor, who will be the chair your Guidance Committee. However, in some cases, a change of advisor may be appropriate. For example, if your scholarly interests have changed substantially, you may petition the LLC faculty to change advisors, with a rationale for doing so. The faculty will then review your request and the reasons for it, and will make a decision that will consider the scholarly interests and load of the faculty members involved, as well as your scholarly interests. Please understand that a faculty member that you would like to work with may already have a full roster of advisees or may not have the appropriate expertise to support your specific interests and goals.

Your chair will help you develop the draft further and discuss with you the composition of the committee. The members of your committee should have expertise in the scholarly areas that are important to your program of studies. They may include faculty in Language, Literacy, and Culture, other areas in the School of Education, or other departments on campus. At least two of the three or four members of the committee must be School of Education faculty members.

When you and your chair agree that the draft is ready for review by other prospective committee members, share the draft with the faculty members you want to ask to serve on your committee and meet with them to discuss their availability and their advice regarding the content of Form D-2. Revise Form D-2 in response to the committee's recommendations and consult with your chair to determine if there should be a meeting of the entire Guidance Committee. This will depend on many factors, but usually there is no expectation that a formal meeting will be held. Whether or not a meeting takes place, it is your responsibility to have all committee members sign the form before submitting it to the Graduate Program Director's office (Furcolo 123). You should also make copies of the signed form for all committee members.

IV. Guidelines for Coursework Addressing the Common Goals

The LLC faculty has designed, and will regularly offer, courses in the following areas to meet the common goals. They reflect what the faculty have agreed upon as fundamental to the preparation of scholars and researchers in our field. You need to meet the credit guidelines for each of the broad areas, but the specific courses are not required for all students. Other courses in LLC, the School of Education, and the University may also meet the goals these courses address. Consult with your advisor about how to address the common goals in your particular program of study.

Common Courses:

Sociocultural theories of language (minimum of 3 credits):

Educ 792M: Theoretical Foundations in Language (3 credits) -- Spring, usually taken in first year

This course introduces a range of sociocultural and sociopolitical theories on language and how these help us to understand education. Students will explore the relationship between theoretical perspectives and research questions and methodology. They will also work toward gaining sufficient familiarity with one or more sociocultural perspectives on language to support close analysis of oral and/or written texts.

Reading research in language, literacy, and culture (minimum of 9 credits):

Educ 792C: Understanding Research in Language, Literacy, and Culture (3 credits) -- Fall, usually taken in first year

This course focuses on understanding research reports on language, literacy, and culture across paradigms and across a range of approaches to research. Students will learn to compare and critique studies, including their assumptions, questions, goals, methods, and findings. The course prepares students to locate literature relevant to their own emerging scholarly interests.

Specifically, students will learn to use the internet, become familiar with relevant journals, and develop methods for keeping track of their reading.

Educ 796: Independent Reading in Language, Literacy, and Culture (from 3 – 9 credits)

These courses focus on independent readings in your special areas within Language, Literacy, and Culture. Together with your advisor, you may select a faculty member who will guide you in pursuing these readings. These independent readings, even though they are less formal than typical courses, are acknowledged as important to your program. They are typically designated as Independent Studies (796) and provide space, time, and structure for independent reading to focus students' scholarly interests. Students begin to identify and critically examine current academic debates in a particular literature relevant to the area they have chosen. The focus is on annotating and commenting on the readings rather than producing a coherent synthesis of the literature.

These courses may be taken at any point in your doctoral studies.

Educ 795A: Literature Reviews in Language, Literacy, and Culture (3 credits) -- usually taken in second year

This course focuses on conceptualizing and conducting literature reviews for different purposes, including reviews for comprehensive examinations, dissertation and grant proposals, dissertations, framing research articles, state of the art articles for different audiences. The major product will be a sample literature review that may form a substantial portion of your comprehensive examination.

Research and writing (minimum of 12 credits):

Educ 815: Researching Language in Educational Settings I & II (6 credits) -- usually taken in second year

This course prepares students to conduct creditable and publishable studies. Students conduct a full ethnographic study as part of the course requirements. They are supported in identifying research questions, planning and implementing data collection and analysis, constructing their own ethical position, writing research proposals and final reports, and presenting their studies at conferences. Students read texts on cultural theory, ethnographic methodology, and ethnographic reports.

Educ 691D: Writing About Language, Literacy, and Culture for Publication (3 credits) -- usually taken in third year

This course provides the structure and support for polishing ethnographic reports or other research papers for publication. Students learn about the review process, how to shape their manuscripts for specific journals, and what constitutes a publishable manuscript. Only students with completed manuscripts (with previous feedback from faculty) are allowed to take the course. Preliminary manuscripts will undergo review by LLC faculty (and, in some cases, LLC Affiliated faculty) through a blind review process, and they will need to be revised before submitting them for publication.

NOTE: Because we believe it is important to become critical readers of all kinds of empirical research, we highly recommend that students also include a course that provides a basic

understanding of quantitative methods of research, including experimental and quasi-experimental research.

Specialization Seminars in Language, Literacy, and Culture (minimum of 9 credits):

In selecting content seminars and other electives, you need to take at least one course in each of the following three fields (some courses may cover more than one field):

- Literacy
- Bilingual/second language development
- Cultural diversity

The following LLC content seminars are offered on a rotating basis over three years, so you will need to check the projected offerings to see when the courses that interest you will be offered.

Seminar on Intercultural Communication (3 credits)

Seminar on Second Language and Literacy Learning (3 credits)

Seminar on Literacy (3 credits)

Seminar on Discourse Analysis (3 credits)

Seminar on Research in Children's Literature (3 credits)

Seminar on Research in Bilingualism and Society (3 credits)

Seminar on Multicultural Education (3 credits)

Seminar on Reading (3 credits)

Seminar on Writing (3 credits)

or doctoral level seminars in other areas and departments

You also need to select courses to meet your own scholarly and professional goals (usually 12 to 18 credits). These may include courses across campus and independent studies. In addition to LLC special seminars that may be relevant, LLC affiliated faculty offer a host of courses that may address your goals and areas of interest. You are strongly encouraged to take courses from departments outside the School of Education to expand your scholarly base and to become acquainted with faculty who may later serve as the outside member of your Dissertation Committee (Dissertation Committees must include a faculty member from outside the School of Education).

In order to fulfill these requirements, the expectation in the LLC program is that students will take approximately 45 course credits to complete their doctoral degrees. (This number does not include at least 18 dissertation credits you will take while working on your doctoral proposal and dissertation). In the end, your committee will not evaluate your program of study by the number of credits taken, but by how well it provides you with the knowledge and skills needed to begin your dissertation and to represent LLC well in the scholarly community.

IV. Preparing for your Comprehensive Examination

Preparing for the comprehensive examination begins with developing a rigorous program of study around the common goals of LLC, the School of Education goals, and your own professional goals. Your coursework and participation in a variety of apprenticeship opportunities, as described in previous sections, all contribute to your preparation for the comprehensive examination. In addition, we encourage you to attend the oral presentations of other students' comprehensive examinations as a way of becoming familiar with the comprehensive examination process.

Purpose and scope of the comprehensive examination. The purpose of the Comprehensive Examination is to demonstrate:

- substantial achievement of the common goals of LLC and your personal goals, as articulated in Form D-2
- readiness to proceed to work on the dissertation

“Comprehensive” does not mean demonstrating everything you have learned about language, literacy, and culture as it relates to a scholarly focus. Rather, it means demonstrating sufficient understanding of the theoretical underpinnings of language, literacy and culture to be able to:

- identify important concepts and problems in your specialization
- develop arguments and defend, support, and construct positions
- provide evidence concisely and clearly to support claims
- articulate the contribution of your work to the field
- draw implications for educational theory, research, and practice

Structure and content of the examination. The exam consists of preparing and presenting two papers related to your research interests and professional goals.

The first paper is a review of the scholarly literature on an issue relevant to your focus in Language, Literacy and Culture. The paper should either identify or re-conceptualize a conceptual, methodological, or empirical problem, take a position on a debate in the field, or take stock of what is known and what needs to be studied to further our understanding of an issue. This paper should be addressed to an academic audience identified by you, and its quality, substance and style should be modeled on a scholarly publication for that audience. While the paper may be based on a paper written for a course, it will normally represent an expansion and revision of such work.

The second paper is a critical reflection on a study you conducted or a course, policy, practice, or program that you developed during coursework or other activities associated with doctoral studies. Reports and/or descriptions of the original activity should accompany the reflection paper. The purpose of the paper is to explore the issues, questions, and tensions that arose when conducting or designing the study or activity and to consider the implications of these insights for the dissertation and/or future professional activities.

Proposal for the comprehensive exam. When you have identified an issue, problem, or position for the literature review portion of the comprehensive exam, and selected and participated in an activity for the critical reflection portion of the exam, you will prepare a 5 -7 page proposal for the comprehensive exam, consisting of four parts:

- 1) A short statement articulating how the papers will address the common goals of LLC and your own professional goals and how they will support work on the dissertation.
- 2) A summary of the argument that will be made about the issue, problem, or position identified in the literature review.
- 3) A description of the activity that will be the subject of the critical reflection portion of the comprehensive exam.
- 4) A working bibliography of the sources used to develop the papers.

Selection of the Comprehensive Examination Committee. In consultation with the chair of your Guidance Committee, you will select three or four appropriate members to serve on the

Comprehensive Examination Committee. Depending on the topics proposed, your Guidance Committee may or may not be the most appropriate persons to serve on the Comprehensive Examination Committee. The chair of the committee must be a faculty member in LLC and will usually work with you through the dissertation, unless the topic changes considerably. If the topics are closely related to the dissertation, it may be appropriate at this point to bring in a faculty member from outside the School of Education to serve on the committee, as required for the dissertation stage. Committee members do not assume, however, that they will automatically continue to serve on the Dissertation Committee.

After finding three or four members who are willing to serve, you will set up a meeting with all the committee members at a mutually convenient time. The purpose of the meeting is to ensure common agreement about the content and scope of the exam, to share resources and ideas about how to develop the papers described in the proposal, to negotiate how members prefer to work with you during the preparation stage, and to sign Form D-3. Typically, students present the first draft of the proposal to their committee chair for feedback and revise the proposal accordingly before presenting it to the other members. The committee may also ask for revisions of the proposal after the meeting.

Oral presentation of the papers. After your program of study has been completed and when committee members agree that the papers for the comprehensive examination are ready, by signing Form D-4, you will arrange a two-hour meeting to orally present and discuss the papers. The meeting must be arranged at least two weeks before the exam, but you should remember that it becomes difficult to find mutually acceptable times to meet toward the end of the semester. You may also announce the meeting on the LLC listserv so that other students may attend. People planning to attend should let the student know so that s/he can schedule an appropriate room.

In consultation with the chair of the committee, you will plan an agenda for the meeting. The agenda should include a brief oral presentation of about thirty (30) minutes to:

- articulate how the two papers are related to your research interests and professional goals and locate the papers within a particular scholarly tradition
- summarize the main arguments or purposes of each paper
- highlight the important issues and questions raised in the papers

The main focus of the meeting, however, should be a scholarly discussion with the committee about the content, methods, conclusions, and implications of each paper. It is appropriate to open up the discussion to guests as the discussion winds down. In the final portion of the meeting, the discussion should segue to

your preliminary plans for the dissertation. Toward the end of the meeting, the chair may ask you and/or guests to leave the room so that the committee can discuss and assess your performance.

Upon successful completion of the comprehensive examination, committee members will sign Form D-5, which signifies that you are officially ready to begin working on the dissertation process.

V. The Dissertation

The dissertation is the culmination of your doctoral process. In what follows, we describe the purpose and description of the dissertation; the role of the dissertation committee; developing the proposal; conducting the research and writing the dissertation; the role of a writing group; and the dissertation defense. We also suggest how you can build on the dissertation for your future research and professional development.

Purpose and Description of the Doctoral Dissertation. In our program, the dissertation is viewed as original research within the broadly defined area of language, literacy, and culture. You should think of the dissertation as research that can make a contribution to the education community and to society in general by expanding and creating knowledge.

The dissertation is unlike other papers you have written – and even unlike other research you may have done – in a number of ways. The audience for the dissertation comprises the broad community of scholars concerned with language, literacy, and culture, including researchers, teacher educators, and teacher-researchers, among others. In this regard, the dissertation differs from previous writing you have done as part of your doctoral program, including the comprehensive examination, which may have had professors, classmates, or the author as the primary audience, and learning or demonstrating learning as the primary function.

The purpose of your doctoral dissertation is to engage in research to develop a theoretical perspective that can make a contribution to the academic community in your specific area of interest. We envision the dissertations that come out of our program as helping to build the conceptual base of the growing field of language, literacy, and culture. In this sense, your doctoral dissertation is not simply your individual work, but also a professional responsibility. It is also a foundation for your future research and scholarship, as well as that of others whose work you will influence.

The Doctoral Committee. As is true of all research efforts, the dissertation is an opportunity for learning and growth by the doctoral candidate and by the members of the dissertation committee. As such,

it is important that you think carefully about the selection of appropriate faculty members to serve on your dissertation committee.

At this point in your doctoral program, you will have already worked closely with your advisor, who will probably also be your dissertation chair. In addition, you may have already developed a good working relationship with two other faculty members through your comprehensive examination. However, for the dissertation committee, one of the three committee members must be from another academic discipline. If this is already the case, you can choose to keep your committee as is. If, however, all three members are from the School of Education, you must substitute an outside member for one of them. In most cases, this will be someone from the University. If you have someone in mind from the Five-College area, you should consult with the Graduate Program Director's office to learn about the current policy concerning committee membership. And remember to count on LLC Affiliated Faculty, since they have demonstrated an interest in working with the program and being of assistance to LLC doctoral students. If your research interests have shifted, you may also want to change the membership of your committee. In thinking about who will be most helpful to you on the committee, you need to think about the expertise, experience, and perspective that a faculty member will bring to the discussion. Your major advisor and fellow doctoral students can help you with this decision.

The Proposal: Selecting a Topic and Methodology. By this point in your doctoral program, you no doubt have a good idea of the kind of research you would like to do for your dissertation. You may have decided on a general topic for your study early on, or you may have settled on it during your comprehensive examination. In a few cases, students select a new topic after the comprehensive examination. It is unwise, however, to select a topic about which you do not know a great deal. In this case, it would necessitate taking additional coursework and perhaps changing the composition of your committee. You should discuss this issue with your major advisor. In any event, the selection of a topic is an important decision that requires a great deal of thinking because it will be your constant companion for a considerable amount of time. Your choice will also influence the kinds of positions for which you will apply, and other professional opportunities you may have available after you complete the dissertation.

One of the most difficult parts in choosing a dissertation topic is determining a scope that is neither too small nor too large. Conversations with faculty, graduates of the LLC program, and fellow graduate students can be very helpful in choosing a topic with an appropriate scope. Reading dissertations in the field is also helpful. All University of Massachusetts dissertations are available in the W. E. B. Du Bois Library, either in bound or electronic form, and LLC faculty members also have some copies available. (See Appendix D for a list of recent LLC dissertations).

The dissertation topic you choose should be researchable using a method in which you have expertise. Your coursework in LLC and other programs and departments should have prepared you with the skills in appropriate methodologies. In LLC, the expectation is that your research study will be qualitative in nature. It can be an ethnographic study, a phenomenological interview study, or another type of qualitative study. In any event, it should be a methodology that you can articulate and defend to your committee members. Further, one or more of your committee members should have expertise in the methodology you select. Whatever your topic or methodology, however, it is our expectation that you will be working with data (collecting, organizing, and analyzing it) as part of your research.

Once you and your advisor feel that your proposal is ready for review by your committee, you should set up a formal meeting of the Dissertation Committee. This initial meeting provides an important opportunity to get feedback from committee members on your topic, methodology, and appropriateness of your study in the area of language, literacy, and culture. The committee will expect you to make revisions according to their feedback. After doing so, have your committee members sign the relevant forms so that you can begin actual work on the study. The committee will generally meet only at the beginning of your dissertation process and for the defense but you, or one of the other members of the committee, may call for other meetings as needed.

The requirements for the dissertation format have changed substantially over the years. In most cases, however, the proposal should include: (a) a statement of the research problem, the theoretical framework for the study, the purpose and goals of the study, the research questions, and the significance of the study; (b) a focused conceptual review of related literature; and (c) a description of research method and data analysis with discussion of limitations. These three areas are roughly preliminary summaries of the first three chapters of a traditional dissertation. In most cases, proposals should range between 25-30 pages in length. A useful handout on dissertation proposals is available from the Graduate Program Director's office, and you should also read proposals of current and former LLC students. Plan on spending about 3 to 6 months of intensive work in writing your proposal. You will work closely with your dissertation chair in developing an acceptable proposal and you can expect to write several drafts based on discussion and feedback from your chair.

It is important to remember that doing research always carries with it ethical implications. Be sure to think carefully about the effect of your work on the participants with whom you will be working. Also, in this regard, note that a form concerning "Human Subjects" is included in the School of Education Doctoral packet (available from the Graduate Program Director's Office), and must be included with the proposal.

In the LLC program, it is our expectation that you will submit your proposal to one of the professional organizations that regularly support doctoral dissertation work (the American Educational

Research Association [AERA], the Spencer Foundation, the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development [ASCD], and others). Be aware, however, that doing so may require making additional revisions to your proposal to meet the organization's guidelines.

Conducting the Research and Writing the Dissertation. The dissertation represents a significant accomplishment in your doctoral process, and in your professional life in general. The process of writing the dissertation will be more productive if you think of it as a significant learning experience rather than as the final hurdle to be cleared for the doctorate. And you will be better prepared for the emotional ups and downs of writing the dissertation if you recognize that it is also a rite of passage through which you will assume a new professional identity.

While conducting the research and writing the dissertation, you need to keep your chair informed of your progress and discuss any problems or issues as they arise. Typically, the dissertation will differ in minor ways from the proposal. Major changes may require the full committee to meet. Please make sure that you provide dissertation committee members with ample time to read, review, and comment on drafts of the dissertation. You should consult with your committee chair and, if needed, with other members of the committee to decide what is appropriate. No member of the dissertation committee, including the chair, is required to read, review, comment on, or attend a meeting or defense during vacation, break periods, or sabbatical leaves. While they may volunteer to do so, you should not expect this. You should also avoid submitting drafts to committee members during the first or last week of any semester, or you should allow extra time if you do so. As you are conducting your research and writing your dissertation, there may be developments in the field related to your study. It is your responsibility to continue to inform yourself of such developments and to update your dissertation.

From this point on, your major contact for support in working on the dissertation is your advisor. You can count on her to meet with you regularly, but it is up to you to decide when you need help, and what kind of help you will need. In some cases, you may consult with another member of the dissertation committee for questions related to his or her expertise. Your other primary support during this time will be your writing group, to which we now turn.

Working With a Writing Group. In the LLC program, we believe that doctoral candidates have a special responsibility toward other doctoral students in the program. This includes providing support to other doctoral students by sharing your research with them because this kind of sharing benefits everyone. One concrete way to do this is by participating in a writing group. Normally, it is expected that doctoral students will form and participate in a writing group. This is part of the apprenticeship in academic work. For example, by working in a writing group, you will get valuable experience in how to respond to the work of others, as well as how to respond to critiques of your own work.

During your doctoral program, it is our hope that you will have been involved in many collaborative ventures with your fellow doctoral students as well as with faculty members. Collaboration in our program is evident through group work in courses, making presentations with colleagues at conferences, and writing together. Now is the time to take full advantage of these relationships. Their advice and support can be invaluable assets to you as you select a topic, get feedback on your writing, consult about resources, and develop a sound theoretical framework for your study. By the time you have reached this stage of your program, you will have a good idea of who in the program has similar research interests, and who can be most helpful to you in the research study you plan to do. If you haven't already participated in a writing group, this is the ideal time to begin.

While your advisor will read all your work and provide you with feedback on it, it is important to remember that she is *not* your copyeditor. Your writing group can be beneficial in this regard as well, although if you feel you need substantial help in this regard, you might consider hiring an editor.

Each writing group is different, but in general it may help to organize your writing group by keeping the following in mind:

- The size of the group is important. Too large, it can become unwieldy; too small, and it can lose some of the power that a diversity of perspectives and experiences might have.
- Flexibility, however, is also good. As a member completes the dissertations and leaves the group, it might make sense to invite another person to join.
- Selecting a specific meeting time can keep you on target. If everyone knows that the group meets every other Monday from 3 – 5 pm, it becomes easier to schedule the meeting into your regular routine

Preparing for the Doctoral Defense. The dissertation defense is an oral examination of your dissertation effort and your knowledge of the topic and field in which your dissertation is located. Your committee is responsible for determining (a) whether your dissertation is acceptable as is or needs minor or major revisions and (b) whether you can articulate indepth knowledge and critical reflection on your dissertation

and the topic and field in which it is located. The procedures of the defense are designed to provide you with the opportunity to demonstrate both of the above.

The defense of your dissertation is scheduled only after all members of your committee and you agree that your dissertation is ready to be defended. Your committee's agreement to schedule a defense date does not indicate final approval of your dissertation, only that it is ready to be defended. You will need to submit a complete draft of the dissertation to the Graduate Program director in order to schedule the defense, and you will need to provide each member of the committee with a copy of the latest version of your dissertation about a month prior to the defense date. You should meet with your dissertation chair shortly after handing the dissertation to the committee members in order to discuss and plan the actual defense.

On the actual day of the defense, you will be expected to prepare and present a brief (usually no more than 20 minutes) synthesis of the dissertation. Then committee members will ask you questions, engage in dialogue about your study, and offer recommendations for revisions or for further related research. Committee members may ask you questions about any aspect of your dissertation and about the general topic and field in which the dissertation is located. Your committee expects you to demonstrate intimate knowledge of your study, its strengths and weaknesses, and its potential contributions to the field. They also expect you to be able to connect your study to broader issues and topics in the field. However, no one expects you to have a definitive answer to every question. Think of the defense as a conversation within a community of scholars, where significant questions and ideas are considered, discussed and debated.

Depending upon the chair and the committee's preference, you may expect the committee to meet privately immediately before and after the defense. The meeting before the defense is to review procedures for the defense, and the meeting after the defense is to discuss and determine the committee's evaluation of the dissertation and defense. These matters may also be discussed during the defense itself rather than in private meetings of the committee.

Dissertation defenses are open to the University community and to the public. It is appropriate for you to invite faculty, educators, and others who have an interest in the topic being discussed. In the LLC program, we especially encourage you to invite your fellow doctoral students so that they benefit from learning about your research, and also because it is important for them to experience dissertation defenses before they have their own. If you invite friends and family members, be sure they understand that the purpose of the defense is to discuss your scholarly work. If you want to audiotape or videotape the defense, make sure to secure permission from all committee members beforehand.

After you pass your defense, you should expect to make revisions in your final manuscript. Make sure you follow all formal and procedural requirements of the School of Education and the Graduate

School. Do not put your final manuscript on acid-free paper until you have secured approval of the format from the Graduate School. You should provide each member of your committee with a bound copy of your final dissertation, unless they indicate that they do not want one. We also request that you provide a copy to the LLC program to be placed in the Multicultural Resource Room so that other doctoral students have access to it. Your dissertation will become available through Dissertation Abstracts International and will be used by scholars, doctoral students, educators, and others.

VI. Getting the Most Out of Your Doctoral Process

Although the dissertation is the culmination of your doctoral program, it is also the beginning of the next stage of your professional career. It is probable that you will never write another document exactly like the dissertation, but in writing it you will learn to do the kind of thinking and writing that is expected in scholarly journals, books, and grant proposals.

After all the work you've done for the dissertation, it is tempting to put it on a shelf and go on to your next project. However, this may not be wise because the dissertation may represent the kind of research and thinking in which you may be engaged for years to come. Therefore, we encourage you to think about how to use what you have learned in your dissertation. For example, look for publishing opportunities in journals in your field in which you can report work in progress. This is also a good time to present your research at relevant conferences.

It is important at this stage of your professional development to seek advice from respected colleagues – your dissertation chair, other faculty members, graduates of LLC, colleagues from other institutions who you have met and worked with, and fellow doctoral students – about next steps. They can suggest appropriate journals to which to submit parts of your dissertation for publication. If you plan to take an academic position, it makes sense to focus first on publishing scholarly journals, as these are generally viewed more favorably than book chapters, textbooks, or even scholarly books. (All of these matters will have been covered in *Writing for Publication in Language, Literacy, and Culture*, which we expect that most students have taken by the time they complete their doctoral studies). Even if you do not plan to take an academic position, however, if your work is significant it should be shared with the broader community of scholars. Whatever position you might have in education, having a record of publications lends prestige and authority to your ideas.

Appendix A

School of Education Goals for Doctoral Study

Appendix B

Samples of Doctoral Form D-2

Appendix C

Sample Proposals for Comprehensive Examination

Appendix D

Recent LLC Dissertations