ANTHROPOLOGY DEPARTMENT
Ph.D. Student Handbook (2018 revision)

Introduction

This handbook outlines requirements and procedures for obtaining the Ph.D. degree in Anthropology at Boston University. It deals only with formal requirements and not with the substance or philosophy of the program. Students should be familiar with the “Policies and Procedures” section in the Graduate School catalogue for details on University requirements. Students who have questions about the administration of academic regulations, policies, programs, or other concerns should consult their advisors or the Director of Graduate Studies. The Department encourages frequent communication between graduate students and the Director of Graduate Studies on all matters concerning graduate education within the Department or the University. Queries regarding petitions, grades, or grade changes, applications for diplomas, student appointments, or other matters should be addressed to the Departmental Administrator.

Students in the doctoral program can obtain the University degree of Master of Arts only as a by-product of the Ph.D. program after completing a minimum of 16 graduate-level semester courses; there is no requirement to attain this degree. Students interested in pursuing only the degree of Master of Arts in Applied Anthropology may be admitted for individual programs of study under some circumstances. Requirements for the M.A.A.A. programs are listed separately.

Initial Counseling and Assignment of Advisors (beginning of first year)

Incoming students should arrange a meeting with the Director of Graduate Studies during the registration period preceding their first semester of study to evaluate their formal background in anthropology and discuss their interests. At this time they should review the program requirements, the departmental regulations, and choose a faculty member who will serve as a first-year advisor.

Students should arrange a meeting with their first-year advisor during the month of September. The first-year advisor is a member of the department’s faculty who will assist a student in designing a course of study for the first and second semesters of the program, taking into account departmental requirements, academic interests, and individual needs. Any time during the first year, but no later than the end of the second semester, students must choose a permanent advisor and report their choice to the Departmental Administrator. Since the relationship between student and advisor is a critical one, students should consult with the Director of Graduate Studies and their first-year advisors before making a decision. While the first-year advisor often becomes the permanent advisor, there is no automatic presumption that this will occur and students should feel free to explore a variety of possible advisors before making their decisions. No student should be without a permanent advisor after the
first year. The Graduate Committee will appoint a permanent advisor for any student who has not already chosen one. Should a student’s chosen advisor be absent from the University for an extended period of time, or not be a resident during a particularly crucial stage in the student’s academic career, the Director of Graduate Studies reserves the right to appoint a temporary advisor. The Graduate Committee must review any change of permanent advisor.

Program of Study (typically first 2 years)

Course Requirements. In the first stage of the program, candidates are expected to prepare themselves in general anthropological research methods and theories, as well as to develop competence in their area (or areas) of specialization. This is accomplished by means of course work, reading, and directed research during the period of residence.

The requirements have changed significantly for students entering in the Fall 2018 term or later. Please be sure to read only the section that applies to you.

For all students entering Fall 2017 or earlier:

- The University requires that students entering with a Bachelor’s degree must successfully complete at least 16 graduate semester courses for the Ph.D. degree.
- Those students who enter the program with a qualifying Master’s degree must successfully complete at least 8 graduate semester courses for the Ph.D. degree. For students admitted after 2015, this distinction will no longer apply; however, a student may petition the Graduate Committee for acceptance of transfer credits from previous programs of study to be credited toward the BU degree requirements (see below).
- All Ph.D. students must take the three semesters of the departmental proseminar, AN 703, 704 & 705, during this first stage of their program of study.
- All students must complete a course in research methods.

In addition to these core requirements, students specializing in sociocultural anthropology must:

- Take at least two anthropology courses in social or cultural theory.
- Take one anthropology course focusing on the ethnography of a specific geographical region outside their primary research area.
- Take one course in linguistics.
- Take one course on the archaeology or history of their research area.

Students specializing in biological anthropology must:

- Take at least three of the 500-level courses offered by the department in that area.
• Take one course on the anthropology of language.
• Take one course in archaeology.

Students with adequate previous training in any of these areas may petition the Graduate Committee for exemption from the relevant parts of this distributional requirement.

**For all students entering Fall 2018 or later:**

Students entering the program must successfully complete at least 16 graduate semester courses (64 credits) for the PhD. Course requirements are as follows:

All students must complete these core requirements:

- AN 701 Cross-Cutting Perspectives in Anthropology
- AN 703 History of Anthropological Thought
- Two of the following:
  - AN 704 Proseminar: Contemporary Anthropological Theory
  - AN 705 Foundations in Biological Anthropology
  - AN 791 Proseminar: Contemporary Archaeological Theory
  - AN 751 Seminar in Linguistic Anthropology
- One course in relevant research methods

In addition to these core requirements, each of the tracks has additional specifics.

For students in **Sociocultural Anthropology**:

- The core courses must include AN 704 and AN 751
- The methodology course should be AN 590
- One anthropology course focusing on the ethnography of a specific geographical region outside the student’s ethnographic area of specialization

For students in **Biological Anthropology**:

- The core courses must include AN 705
- The methodology course should be AN 595
- One statistics course, normally AN 512
Students are expected to take at least one course or directed reading/research course in each of the Biological Anthropology subfields: Primatology; Human Biology; Genetics/Genomics; Paleoanthropology/Morphology

For students in Anthropological Archaeology:

- The core courses must include AN 791
- The methodology course should be AN 794 Scientific Methods in Archaeology
- A second methods course in archaeology, such as AR 516 or 518, or a graduate-level statistics course, such as AN 512
- AN 793 World Archaeology

**The following requirements apply to ALL students regardless of admissions date:**

*Remaining Courses.* The remaining courses should be chosen in consultation with the student's academic advisor to produce a coherent program of study suited to the student’s research and career objectives. The specific courses may include ones in other disciplines and departments, and in various sub-fields, techniques, methods or “schools” of anthropology.

Students admitted as post-M.A. Ph.D. candidates (this status only applies to some students admitted before 2015) are expected to meet the same requirements as all other candidates. Students may petition the Graduate Committee and Chair to count previous graduate level courses in these areas toward those required for the degree if they are directly related to their overall plan of study.

The progress of all students in the program is evaluated each Spring by the departmental faculty as a whole.

**Language Requirement** (as soon as possible before the Qualifying Examination)

Before taking the comprehensive examination, all students must achieve mastery in the major scholarly language of their field region or another foreign language relevant to the literature in their field. Students are expected to master the local language of their field site; this may be the same as the scholarly language in some cases. Mastery is normally indicated by the successful completion of three years of college language study or its equivalent. More may be required depending on the specific language.

During the first term of enrollment, students should give the Director of Graduate Studies a plan for meeting this requirement. Students must apply to the Director of Graduate Studies for the final approval of this requirement.

**Ph.D. Qualifying Examination** (typically in the third year, but sometimes earlier)

After completing the necessary coursework and the language requirement, each student must pass a written and an oral Ph.D. Qualifying Examination given by members of the advisory
committee. The purpose of the examination is to determine whether the student is qualified to conduct Ph.D. level research and dissertation writing. Successful completion of the examination advances students into the category of Ph.D. candidacy. To this end, each student must petition the department (through the Chair and the Director of Graduate Studies) to establish an Examination Committee comprised of the advisor and at least two other members. Students may propose appropriate candidates, but the advisor and at least one other member must come from the department. Other committee members may be from another department in the Graduate School or from outside of the Graduate School or the University by special arrangement. In selecting a committee, the long-term schedules of prospective committee members (e.g., future sabbaticals and leaves of absence) should be taken into consideration. Once established, changes or replacements in membership of the Examination Committee can be made only by petition from the student or advisor to the Director of Graduate Studies.

At this initial stage the committee members are responsible for supervising the preparation of a bibliography that covers the following areas:

1) general anthropological method and theory
2) subdisciplinary topic
3) at least one geographical area (or, for biological-anthropology students, taxonomic grouping) that will be the focus of the dissertation research.

The draft bibliography must be presented to the committee members who will meet with the student to suggest any additions or other changes they feel are necessary. The final version will represent the basis from which questions for the Qualifying Examination will be drawn.

One copy of the final bibliography must be given to the department.

Once the bibliography is complete, and in consultation with his or her committee, the student will set the approximate date for the Qualifying Examination. The written exam should normally take place no later than the end of the sixth semester for post-B.A. students (i.e., those who have a 16 semester course requirement; this includes all students admitted after 2015) or by the end of the fourth or beginning of the fifth semester for post-M.A. students.

Permission to take the Qualifying Examination will only be granted if all other requirements have been fulfilled (including the language requirement and the completion of any incompletes). The date for the exam will normally be set at least one month before it takes place. The Ph.D. Qualifying Examination will not normally be given during vacations or examination periods. However, students may elect to schedule a Ph.D. Qualifying Examination during the reading periods.

Each of the Examination Committee’s members will contribute questions to the advisor, who will assume responsibility for composing a set of nine questions (of which the student will answer six) based on the bibliography. At least two weeks prior to the examination, the advisor should submit copies of the questions to the department's faculty for review. The student will have 10 days to write the exam. Copies of the written exam will be given to each committee member, who will have 4 to 7 days to read them. One copy of the written exam
must be submitted to the department. The committee will then meet, without the student, to discuss the results. If the committee finds that the examination answers as submitted do not meet minimum departmental standards, it may cancel the oral exam and give a failing grade at this point.

The oral exam is open to the public and the committee will focus primarily on the answers to the written questions, although the student may be queried on other areas covered by the bibliography.

At the end of the oral exam, the committee will meet briefly to discuss the results and then inform the student of their decision:

A pass is awarded when the student demonstrates competency in all parts of the written and oral examinations. By passing the Qualifying Examination, the student immediately advances to Ph.D. candidacy.

A qualified pass is given when the student demonstrates general competency but shows weakness in one area that requires remedial work. In this case the student may be asked to retake a single part of the examination or complete some other type of work approved by the committee. Upon successfully retaking the required part of the examination or completing any other required remedial work, a student will advance to Ph.D. candidacy.

A failing grade means the entire exam (written and oral) must be re-taken within six months to one year if the student wishes to proceed. Only one re-examination is permitted and if a student fails to pass the second written and oral exam he or she will not be allowed to continue in the graduate program (see Termination below).

Once entered, a Ph.D. candidacy will expire on its fifth anniversary and after such time will be renewed only if the student requalifies for candidacy as determined by the department and the Graduate School.

After passing the Qualifying Examination, the student should ask the Department Chair in consultation with the Graduate Committee to declare a First and Second Reader for the dissertation. The First Reader is the primary advisor. The Second Reader will be determined by the advisor, the Chair, and the Graduate Committee, based on suggestions by the student. Both Readers should normally be members of the department. From this point on, these two readers will supervise the dissertation research and the writing of the thesis, so their appointment should be based on their expertise and research interests as well as relevant personality aspects. Should either of these two readers become unable to continue their roles as supervisors, the Graduate Committee reserves the right to appoint replacements. Although a committee of five members will eventually be appointed to review the final draft of the dissertation, under the rules of the Graduate School only the First and Second Readers may be formally chosen before it is complete. For this reason, while students should keep in contact with other potential thesis readers, there can be no formal appointments for other readers until the dissertation is ready to defend (see Defense of the Dissertation below).
Prospectus and Grant Proposal (typically in the second or third year)

Most research funding deadlines occur very early in the Fall term. Most students apply in the fall of the third year, although other schedules may be appropriate in particular cases. In order to prepare competitive proposals, the department strongly encourages students to settle on a proposal topic with the advisor during the previous spring term, and to submit drafts for comment well in advance of the deadlines. A copy of any awarded grants must be submitted to the Department.

After successful completion of the Qualifying Examination and admission to candidacy, the student will formally submit a research prospectus to the department. This prospectus should include a statement of the theory, methods and techniques to be employed and on the significance of the research, and is usually an expanded version of the grant proposal.

The prospectus should be ready for presentation no later than the end of the next semester following the successful completion of the Qualifying Examination. There are three steps to be followed:

1) A complete draft of the proposal, written under the Examination Committee’s guidance, must be discussed by the committee as a whole prior to the formal presentation of the proposal before the department. Copies of the draft are to be in the hands of all committee members at least two weeks prior to the meeting of the entire committee.

2) Once suggested changes are agreed upon and completed, the first and second readers must inform the department in writing that the proposal is ready to defend.

3) At this point a date is scheduled for its presentation. Normally, presentation of research proposals will be scheduled only when classes are in session. All faculty members and graduate students are encouraged to attend these presentations, and the student’s complete Examination Committee must be present. The student’s advisor will chair the presentation. It should last an hour followed by a one-hour discussion. The student’s committee will meet right after the presentation to decide whether further changes are necessary, or if the prospectus can be approved in its present form. If the proposal is not acceptable, a redesigned one (or a substitute) must be submitted for review and discussion to the Examination Committee as a whole within ninety days unless the Graduate Committee approves a deferment. The Director of Graduate Studies must be informed of all these decisions. An accepted proposal must be submitted to the Department for formal notification of completion to the Graduate School.

Dissertation Research (as soon as possible after the Prospectus Defense, typically during or just after the third year)

The Ph.D. dissertation, based on original research, must be a significant contribution to knowledge, presented clearly, precisely and in good literary style. The dissertation is
normally based on field work or laboratory research, although in special circumstances the department will approve projects based on library or other kinds of documentary research.

Defense of the Dissertation

A final draft of the dissertation (300-350 pages are recommended) should meet high critical standards and, as a public document available to the entire scholarly community, it should be a source of pride for both the candidate and the department. The dissertation defense is therefore not pro forma, but rather the last stage in a critical process designed to produce the best quality scholarship possible.

The department’s Chair appoints the oral defense committee. The defense committee is composed of at least five Graduate School faculty members: First and Second Readers, a Chair, and two others. It must include at least two members of the departmental faculty. At the recommendation of the department and with the approval of the Dean of the Graduate School, one of the remaining three members of the defense committee may be designated to represent a division or institution outside the School (see the Department Chair to initiate a request for such special service appointments). The Department does not pay an honorarium to such appointees and cannot normally pay for travel expenses to those coming to campus from beyond the Boston area. The Graduate School, however, sometimes has travel funds available for this purpose; application should be made through the Department Chair. The Defense Committee Chair must be a member of the department and cannot be one of the First or Second Readers. The Chair’s duties begin only when the student’s final draft of the dissertation has been approved in writing by both the First and Second Readers as complete and read to defend. A copy of this letter should be forwarded to the Graduate Committee, at which time the Defense Committee Chair will set a defense date for the student. The Committee Chair presides at the defense itself. All regularly appointed faculty members may serve on the Dissertation Defense Committee.

The Committee Chair at the candidate’s request schedules the defense; it is the responsibility of these two to make the necessary arrangements with other members of the Committee and to see that the Graduate School is officially notified. The defense is a public event and the University publishes the time and place at which it will occur.

In preparation for the examination, the candidate must first receive departmental approval of an abstract for submission to the Graduate School, as indicated by the signatures of the First Reader, DGS, and Department Chair on the appropriate GRS form. Because each of the five faculty committee members is expected to review the entire draft dissertation, the candidate shall distribute copies to each at least three weeks before the scheduled defense. If these two conditions are not met, the dissertation defense examination will be postponed. Normally, presentations of dissertation defenses will be scheduled only when classes are in session.

During the defense of the dissertation, the Defense Committee acts for the faculty as a whole in determining whether or not an adequate defense is presented. If the defense is not acceptable, specific recommendations for revisions will be made. If major revisions are necessary, another defense may be held or a single member of the committee may be appointed to supervise the completion of the requested revisions. Only when the dissertation
has been finally and completely approved (i.e., any revisions completed and approved by the Committee Chair, and the dissertation itself in a form suitable for deposition in the University Library), will copies be signed. One copy of the dissertation should be submitted to the Department Office.

The Department deadline for handing the first draft of the dissertation in to the Committee will be March 1st, whereas March 30th will be the last day of the academic year for a dissertation defense. A date of March 30th will allow students to make any necessary corrections and to arrange formal formatting with the Graduate School. Please note that the Graduate School imposes a deadline for the submission of the completed dissertation for a May degree. A student who submits the completed dissertation after the GRS deadline but before June 1st will be awarded a degree in January without needing to pay fall Continuing Fees.

University Time Limits

University rules state that the post-B.A. program shall be completed within seven years after the first registration for doctoral study, and that students initially admitted at the post-M.A. level shall complete their program within five years of first registration for doctoral study.

Termination

The only grounds for terminations from the Graduate School are:

1) failure in more than two courses (i.e., receiving a grade of below B- or having an unconverted Incomplete for longer than one full academic year);

2) failure of the Ph.D. Qualifying Examination;

3) failure to complete the Ph.D. program within university time limits; and

4) moral turpitude.

The Graduate School normally initiates action for termination on the above-listed grounds (not the Department). Termination procedures are most commonly initiated because the student has more than two permanent incompletes. A student who chooses to withdraw from the program after completing course requirements may apply to the department Chair to be awarded an M.A. degree.

Grievances

Any student grievances that arise will be dealt with by the Graduate Committee on the basis of a written petition, protest, or request for a personal appearance before the Committee. If the grievance involves a faculty member who is presently sitting on the Committee, the faculty member will not be present during presentation of the grievance.

If the Graduate Committee is not able to resolve the matter of the grievance or if the student is not satisfied with the decision of the Graduate Committee, then the grievance shall be heard
by the whole faculty of the department. If the faculty still does not resolve the matter, then the grievance will be addressed to an appropriate committee of the Graduate School.

Miscellaneous Information

Aid to Students

Five years of fellowship aid, including an annual stipend, medical benefits, and payment of tuition and fees, are ordinarily offered to all students admitted to graduate study who remain in good standing in the doctoral program. Information on current benefits, policies, and restrictions should be sought from the Graduate School office. For additional funding opportunities, students should consult their advisors and the DGS.

Incomplete or Deficient Coursework and Financial Aid

The department strongly discourages students from accumulating too many incompletes. Incompletes that are left unfilled beyond one semester are highly prejudicial to students in terms of student reviews, allocations of tuition remission and stipends, and assessment of performance. They are the most common ground for termination by the University. In addition, incomplete work is often evaluated so long after the course has finished that the results provide much less educational value for the student than work finished in a timely manner.

Students who find themselves hard-pressed to complete coursework on time should first consult the course instructor. Often the timing of assignments or the form of their submission can be redesigned in a way that is both acceptable to the instructor and relieves some of the time pressure on the student. Students planning to take an Incomplete should consult the professor involved before the end of classes in order to obtain prior approval. For this purpose, students should obtain a departmental “incomplete form” which requires the signature of both the student and instructor, the reason for the Incomplete, and a schedule for the timely completion of any outstanding work. The instructor must submit the completed form to the department along with the Official Grade Sheet. The Graduate School will automatically freeze any Incomplete that remains outstanding after one year as an Incomplete. There is a strict petition process to obtain a grade after it is frozen.

In addition to incomplete coursework, other situations that may jeopardize a student’s chances for aid include:

1) a level of completed academic work that is judged deficient by the faculty;

2) assigned work for previous aid awards that was performed unsatisfactorily; and

3) delays in completion of course work or prolonged preparation for examinations.

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