

## Comp 2: Step-by-Step

**Late Fall of Year 2:** determine the area of your dissertation project; identify and confirm your supervisor and committee for Comp 2; construct your reading list; submit the Comp Sign-Up Form and register for CDNS6907 before the Winter registration deadline.

**Early Winter of Year 2:** read texts on your reading list; write your diss. proposal (the written portion of Comp. 2); in March or April, defend Comp. 2

- 1. Fall of Year 2:** As soon as you have successfully defended Comp. 1 in the month of October, you should turn to the work of Comp. 2, which involves: a) deciding on the subject and approach for the **dissertation** you aim to write, b) assembling the **committee** for your Comp. 2 and normally for your dissertation project as well, and c) constructing a **reading list** with your dissertation project in mind. The written portion of your second comprehensive exam is your dissertation proposal. The oral defense concerns both the proposal you've written and the texts on your reading list.
  - Your **committee** for Comp. 2 is composed of a supervisor and two other committee members. These faculty members should be chosen on the basis of the relevance of their expertise to your dissertation project. They not only advise and examine you on Comp. 2, they continue on as the supervisory committee for your dissertation. At least one of the three committee members must be appointed to or formally affiliated with SICS (through a cross-appointment). A degree of overlap between your committee for Comp. 1 and Comp. 2 is permitted but there must be some variation: at least one member should be different and preferably more than one. Consult the list of our "Faculty Members" and "Affiliated Faculty" under "People" on the School website. Read faculty profiles, especially areas of research and lists of publications. You may also look at faculty in other departments. Ideally, you secure a supervisor first and then together with that supervisor, reach out to other possible committee members. You may wish to speak with the School's Graduate Supervisor to identify possible committee members, but do some research first. It is recommended that you clear your ideas for the committee members with the Graduate Supervisor before you reach out with requests.
  - While you are working on the composition of your committee, you also should be working on a **brief description of your dissertation project**, which you can use to approach potential committee members. This brief description should contain the question you want to ask (or at least indicate the direction of your research), the fields you will be drawing upon, the approach to research you see yourself taking.
  - Once you have the committee in place, you may wish to schedule a **research design meeting**. The purpose of this meeting is for you to receive some initial feedback on your dissertation idea and suggestions for your Comp. 2 reading list, which should support your writing of the dissertation proposal. The dissertation proposal is the written portion of this comprehensive (see below).

- Your **reading list** for Comp. 2 is more tailored to your dissertation area and methods than the broader reading you did for Comp. 1. Think about: what **theory** you need to read to in order to establish an approach and identify key analytic concepts. As well, what will you need to read in order to make decisions about appropriate **methods** for your research and analysis? What existing scholarship will you need to discuss in the **literature review** section of your proposal? Are there existing studies that correspond to yours in their focus or methods? It's always best to establish what kind of work already exists in the area and what work yours will be in conversation with. How do you imagine your dissertation will make a different contribution or extend the existing research? Finally, your proposal will also describe the **primary material or data** you will be gathering and analysing. What do you need to read in order to approach that material with some knowledge?
  - As with Comp. 1, the reading list should be **50 scholarly books or the equivalent** (with each scholarly article or book chapter counting as 1/5 a book). Preface your list with a short rationale (1-3 paragraphs). You may wish to divide the list into sections addressing the elements of your dissertation proposal. You are expected to read every item on your list, even if you do not cite it directly in your dissertation proposal. If you include on the reading list several texts you have read already in the context of graduate courses, please clearly indicate which texts. (These should not surpass 6 books or the equivalent in articles.) Your dissertation proposal certainly can make use of texts that were on your reading list for Comp. 1; however, do not include these in the composition of your reading list for Comp. 2.
2. By mid-December or as soon as you have your committee's final approval of your reading list, submit the **CDNS 6905-6907 PhD Comp Sign-Up Form**. Your reading list will be reviewed for approval by the School's graduate committee. Once you have that approval, you may proceed to step 3.
  3. **Register for CDNS6907** (the Comp. 2 course) before the mid-January deadline.
  4. **Winter of Year 2:**
    - As with Comp. 1, your comp preparation process should include **meetings** with your supervisor and possibly other committee members, to discuss your readings as well as your progress on the writing of the dissertation proposal.
    - Your dissertation **proposal should be 20-30 pages**, excluding the bibliography, which draws on your reading list. For advice on writing a dissertation proposal, consult the **SICS-Research Proposal Guidelines** document on our website. **Submit your dissertation proposal to your committee by late February/early March**. You may be asked to revise it.
    - When your committee members agree that a) your proposal is ready for defense and b) you are ready to be examined on your knowledge of the texts on your reading list, submit the **PhD Comp 2 Exam Scheduling Request Form**. On this form, you and your committee provide the date on which you wish to have the oral defense scheduled. (Normally the defense for Comp. 2 occurs in March or April of your second year.) Submit the form at least two weeks prior to the defense date.

- Page 2 of the form provides the following **guidelines for considering the readiness of the dissertation proposal for defense**:

*In order to be considered ready for defense, a dissertation proposal should:*

- *present and elaborate a research question appropriate to the scope of a doctoral dissertation*
- *clearly describe the parameters of the research*
- *clearly identify the primary material, sites, or sources of data to be analyzed*
- *present the theoretical frame and key concepts to be deployed*
- *describe the methodology for the project, including specific methods with discussion of the nature of the knowledge they produce*
- *present a literature review of related published work, which the project proposes to build upon*
- *provide a preliminary break-down of chapters and their contents*

*A proposal which is not ready for defense is one that fails to meet more than one of the criteria listed above. Inevitably, committee members will have questions and suggestions for improvements to the diss. proposal, but these in and of themselves are not necessarily grounds for a decision that the proposal is not ready to be defended.*

- As with Comp. 1, your committee members confer, agree on a set of questions to be asked at the two-hour oral defense, and provide these to the Program Administrator at least four days before the defense date. These should be submitted on the **PhD Comp 2 6907 Oral Examination Template**. The committee is asked to provide 6-10 questions; of these, at least 3 should address the dissertation proposal and 3 should address readings from the reading list. Beyond these questions, additional ones will arise in the course of the defense. The purpose of the oral defense is to assess your close engagement with your reading list and the soundness of the dissertation proposal.
- At the end of your oral defense your committee will give you your **grade** of “Satisfactory” or “Unsatisfactory” and will complete a **Comp 2 Grade Report Form**, which they will submit to the program administrator. You will be formally notified of the results of your comp via email and the grade will be available on Carleton Central at the end of the term. The form explains how to assess your performance as follows:

*A satisfactory examination means that a) the proposal submitted is informed as to existing scholarship; thoughtful with regard to theoretical concepts and methodology; focused in its research question; and clear with regard to the dissertation parameters and primary material, research sites, and/or sources of data; b) the student’s answers to questions in the oral defense demonstrate a thorough knowledge of the readings on the list; the ability to analyze, compare, and synthesize those readings; and the ability to apply the readings to the proposed dissertation research, including specification of how the research relates to existing scholarship. The assessment for Comp. 2 should consider both the diss. proposal and the oral defense. Strong performance in the oral defense may improve an overall assessment; however, a weak performance in the oral will not, in and of itself, result in a grade of Unsatisfactory.*