Theatre Arts and Performance Studies

GRADUATE HANDBOOK

This document supersedes previous TAPS Graduate Student Handbooks.
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The handbook is addressed to current and prospective Graduate students to be used as a planning guide and reference resource throughout a student’s academic career. Pertinent University web resources should be regarded as the primary references for degree requirements and options.
1) Doctoral Program in Theatre and Performance Studies

The Ph.D. in Theatre and Performance Studies, launched together with the Brown/Trinity Consortium in 2002, builds on the strength of the long-standing Brown Master’s Program that historically provided the field of theatre with many excellent scholars. The Ph.D. program stresses research and scholarship, in theatre history, theory and criticism, and performance studies. It is an ideal degree for students interested in the intersections between artistry and scholarship as there are many excellent opportunities to collaborate with artists as well as opportunities to develop scholarship in interdisciplinary modalities. The program is committed to providing students with a firm grasp of the fields of theatre studies and performance studies and an understanding of the historical underpinnings both of theatre practice and of performance scholarship. This is to say that Brown’s Ph.D. has a strong commitment both to theatre history and to the academic histories informing the “broad spectrum” of performance studies. The program is committed to helping to place students in academic positions, should they so desire, upon completion of the program. Faculty work together with students to prepare them best for the requirements of the job market, even as the faculty work hard to foster each student’s individual, often less market-driven passions.

Graduate Students in Theatre and Performance Studies at Brown University benefit from the flexibility of Brown’s graduate system that allows opportunities to take classes throughout the university as well as with distinguished field faculty. The libraries at Brown provide exceptional resources for research and house several special collections, among them the Harris Collection of American Drama and Poetry; the Smith Collection of Conjuring, Magicana, and Popular Entertainment Forms, and the Albert-Bernard Shaw Collection. A consortium with Trinity Repertory Company and a developing collaboration with Rhode Island School of Design make the Brown environment alive with opportunities in the performing arts. The interdisciplinary field of performance studies similarly takes advantage of a diversity of programs and resources both on campus and in greater Providence. A dynamic theatre season at Brown and a slate of courses with significant strength in theatre history, performance theory, cultural studies, and world performance allow a student to determine the right mix of theatre studies and performance studies for his or her particular project.

Advising faculty, in consideration of a student’s strengths, needs, and specific areas of interest, work with each student to determine a student’s course of study. The graduate program is highly selective and that means that the ratio of graduate student to faculty favors student access to faculty – a strength that cannot be underestimated.

The Ph.D. program offer a broad-based intellectual, critical, and aesthetic foundation along with opportunities for frequent collaboration among scholars, actors, directors, playwrights, designers, and performance and new media artists -- in the classroom and in production. Graduate students may serve as dramaturgs and literary-historical-performance theory resource people on faculty and M.F.A. creative projects, or graduate students may create such projects themselves. One of the things that makes Brown’s graduate program unique is the close collaboration with the M.F.A. programs in directing and acting through the Brown/Trinity Consortium as well as close collaboration with the Brown M.F.A. playwriting program, the premier program in the country. The intersection of these programs means that creativity and scholarship are never far apart –
indeed the faculty in each of these programs is dedicated to a rigorous exploration of the intersections between history, theory, practice, and artist-scholarship. The Speech and Anthropology wings of the venture further contribute to broader cultural and critical concerns. The confluence of a variety of approaches assures an atmosphere of debate, discovery, and overall rigor.

The program offers opportunities for pedagogical development as well. Doctoral students may lecture in theatre history and theory in M.F.A. acting and directing courses as well as assume undergraduate teaching or other duties within the Department. Some opportunities include teaching assistantships in Theatre Arts and Performance Studies departmental courses, or the teaching of courses in a student’s area of specialty. Of course, a Brown graduate student need not teach every semester, and Brown does not take advantage of graduate students by relying on them as teachers. Brown protects its stellar undergraduate reputation by insuring that undergraduate education remain an extremely high priority and therefore, unlike other schools, Brown does not indiscriminately take advantage of graduate students in the classroom. This results in a win-win situation for grads and undergrads alike. Though a grad student is not overburdened with teaching, the Department requires that each student gain experience in pedagogy. Brown’s Sheridan Center for Teaching and Learning offers many opportunities for Graduate advancement in pedagogy, as do teaching opportunities within the Theatre Arts and Performance Studies Department itself. Specific teaching assistantships will be determined in consultation with a student’s committee.

The graduate field of Theatre and Performance Studies includes faculty members from Theatre Arts and Performance Studies as well as Field Faculty from Anthropology, Africana Studies, Music, English, Literary Arts, Comparative Literature, Italian, Classics, and Modern Culture and Media. Indeed, and in some distinction to other programs, students are encouraged to take advantage of courses across the university, meaning that the diversity of opportunities at Brown can be folded into a program of study. The number of doctoral candidates in Theatre and Performance Studies on the Brown campus will range between ten and sixteen at any given time. Graduate seminars are small and there is ample opportunity, in and out of classes, for exchange among graduate students and faculty.

2) Graduate Admissions

The program offers a number of options for admission. Students with a B.A. may apply for either

- The A.M./Ph.D. program: Students accepted to this program do not yet have a Masters in the field and expect to acquire an A.M. in the process of doctoral candidacy at Brown.
- The Ph.D. program: Students who already have an M.A. in Theatre and/or Performance Studies or a related field may apply for the Ph.D. Students with an M.F.A. may also apply to the Ph.D., but may be required to complete additional coursework.
- The Brown/Trinity Consortium M.F.A.-Ph.D. program. Directing students in the Brown/Trinity Consortium may apply for admission into the combined M.F.A.-Ph.D. program after their first year of study. The combined program requires at least one year of additional course work to reach a total of 18 courses, as well as comprehensive exams and a scholarly dissertation. Directing students would complete their next 2 years
according to the Ph.D. curricular model, but would receive mentoring that would allow them to make the most effective progress towards Ph.D. candidacy.

For graduate application deadlines please check the Graduate School website. A statement of purpose, an academic writing sample (10-25 pages), and three letters of recommendation are requested with the application. Also requested are complete official transcripts of all work (graduate and undergraduate) in sealed envelopes. GRE verbal reasoning scores are required and are due by the application deadline. All international applicants whose native language is not English must submit an official Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) or International English Language Testing System (IELTS) score. An undergraduate major in theatre or performance studies is not required for admission. Applicants who have had little or no academic work in theatre may, however, experience initial difficulty with graduate courses that presuppose undergraduate work in theatre or performance studies and may be guided by advisors to acquire the competence in theatre scholarship expected for the Ph.D.

Inquiries regarding the Doctoral Program should be addressed to Spencer Golub, Director of Graduate Studies in Theatre and Performance Studies, Box 1897, Brown University, Providence, RI 02912; e-mail: Spencer_Golub@brown.edu.

Inquiries regarding the Playwriting MFA should be addressed to Erik Ehn, Head of Playwriting, Box 1897, Brown University, Providence, RI 02912; email: Erik_Ehn@brown.edu.

Inquiries regarding the Brown/Trinity MFAs in Acting or Directing (including financial support for Brown/Trinity MFA students) should be addressed to Jill Jann, Consortium Administrator at Trinity Repertory Company, 201 Washington Street, Providence, RI 02903; e-mail: jjann@trinityrep.com.

The application can be found at http://www.brown.edu/academics/gradschool/apply. Specific information for the Acting/Directing Auditions and Writing Requirement can be found at http://www.browntrinity.com/programs/admission/.

3) Financial Support

Doctoral students are guaranteed five years of full tuition support as well as an admirable stipend and health benefits. The first year is awarded Fellowship, meaning that a student does not have any requirements beyond coursework. The second three years are awarded as Teaching Assistantships or Proctorships. The final year is a Dissertation Fellowship. Some flexibility is allowed. For example, should a student be awarded an outside grant for study, financial support from Brown can be deferred. If a student is in good standing and still needs time to complete the dissertation after five years, a student may apply for continuing funding, though that funding is not guaranteed.

The program provides a financial aid package for MFA Playwriting students that covers tuition, health fee and health insurance for three years of full-time enrollment. Students receive a 50% stipend during academic Year 1 (based on a 9-month academic calendar) and 100% stipends
during academic Years 2 and 3. Students also receive a stipend for two summers. Funding is contingent on students remaining in good standing.

4) Graduate Requirements

Required Courses for the Ph.D.

Students who do not yet have a Masters in the field and expect to acquire an A.M. in the process of doctoral candidacy at Brown will complete at least 12-14 courses. Two of these may be independent studies. Students who already have an A.M. or M.F.A degree from another institution will work with the Director of Graduate Studies to determine how many of their A.M. or M.F.A. credits will transfer toward Brown's Ph.D. degree. For students for whom all credits are accepted the following will be required. For the Ph.D. degree, at least 8 courses beyond the Master's Degree are required. Two of these may be independent studies. All Ph.D. students are required to take the graduate seminar offered each semester. For Ph.D. students who enter with a B.A., this is normally five courses. For students entering with an A.M., this is usually three courses. In addition, upon examination of a student's transcript, a student may be asked to audit, for no graduate credit, all or some of the three-semester Histories of World Theatre course sequence (TAPS 1230, TAPS 1240, and TAPS 1250). The premise upon which these prerequisite requirements are based is that a student arriving from elsewhere to pursue a Ph.D. in Theatre and Performance Studies at Brown should be held responsible for knowing the course content of what our undergraduate concentrators know. With permission of the instructor, graduate credit may be awarded in TAPS 1230, TAPS 1240, TAPS 1250, or several of the TAPS 1280 classes, or in two of the acting courses that are taught by members of the Graduate Faculty, TAPS 1190: Character, Mask and Action and TAPS 1400: Advanced Performance. Since only 2000-level or above courses are designated "Primarily for Graduate Students" at Brown, the instructor of a 1000-level course, that is usually enrolled in by undergraduate and graduate students, will often assign additional work for a graduate student who wants to receive graduate credit for the course. Those students who do not need to take a course for credit and who do not want to pay for an "audit" designation to appear on their graduate school transcript may "vagabond" a course, meaning they may sit in on the course but receive no credit or any formal designation that they were in the course. Students who audit a course generally work out with the course's instructor which and how many assignments must be completed to receive credit as an auditor. An audited course does not, however, count toward graduate credit. Also required of all graduate students for each semester in residence is participation in the Graduate Colloquium Series. See the Colloquium Series described below. For a list of "milestones" for progress in the department, go to Milestones.

5) Elective Courses

Brown's Graduate Faculty offers a full menu of specialty courses currently in the areas of Theatre and Drama of the Americas; European Theatre and Performance Traditions; Non-Western Theatre and Performance; Theatre and Neuroscience; The Development of Twentieth-Century Theatre in the West; Russian Theatre and Drama; Revolution as a Work of Art; Mise en Scene; Performance Theory; New Theories for a Baroque Stage; Ethnography and Performance; Feminist, Race-Critical, Queer Theory and Performance; Abstraction and Resistance; and
Performance Art Theory and Practice. Our Department also offers courses in Dance History, Modern Dance and West African Traditions in American Dance, as well as in Solo Performance (Acting) and Style and Performance (Acting) that some of our graduate students have found to be quite useful. These courses offer different methodologies and discourses as well as variety in subject matter. In addition, our diverse field faculty offer courses in Playwriting, Music, Africana Studies, English, Literary Arts, Comparative Literature, Classics, Anthropology, Modern Culture and Media, etc. There are many other relevant courses involving film studies, digital media studies, literary theory and genre studies, religion and ritualistic performance, art history and representation, cultural studies and political discourse, and gender and identity politics, many of which are cross-listed and some team-taught through two departments, indicating the openness to academic border-crossing and resource-sharing that is the norm at Brown. Students may choose to audit or to "vagabond" (described above) an elective course, and Brown's unofficial "shopping period" (the period during which you can add a course without incurring a fee) allows students to sit in on several different courses before deciding upon a final course schedule for the semester.

6) Graduate Colloquia

In addition to a number of public lectures that are open to all Brown students as well as to the Providence community, the graduate faculty of the Department convenes a series of colloquia per academic year that are specifically designed to inform and engage our graduate students. The colloquia are both faculty- and student-run and may include sessions in which students present current work. Speakers are invited from a list that is drawn up by the graduate faculty and the graduate students to reflect students' research interests. We often host scholars at the forefront of scholarship so that graduate students are exposed to the newest and best that performance scholarship has to offer and so that students have a chance to establish personal contacts with persons influential in the field. Past guests have included Diana Taylor, Elin Diamond, Herbert Blau, Jennifer Devere Brody, Ann Pellegrini, Timothy Murray, Shannon Jackson, Eric Lott, Roberto Varea, Jody Enders, Michal Kobialka, Branislav Jakovljevic, Fred Moten, Karen Shimakawa, Adrian Heathfield, Andre LePecki, Joseph Roach, Tracy Davis, Alice Rayner, Michal Kobialka, and Martin Harries. Brown Professors from the Department and the Field Faculty also present their recent work. The colloquium, which is attended by faculty and graduate students, and moderated by a graduate student from the department, meets on approximately two Friday afternoons a month throughout the year. The colloquium also sponsors “key text” sessions specially designed for incoming graduate students, as well as workshops on professional development, where faculty coach students in “how to” write proposals, abstracts, conference papers, resumes, job letters, etc. Graduate students are required to attend all of the graduate colloquia sessions. First year students will receive academic credit for the colloquium; advanced graduate students do not. See this year’s schedule here.

7) Foreign Language Requirements

The Doctoral Program requires that Ph.D. candidates satisfy the requirement for reading comprehension in two foreign languages, or satisfy a requirement for research proficiency in one foreign language. Both languages should be completed before the student can graduate to ABD status (all but dissertation).
The requirement for reading comprehension in two languages can be satisfied in one of the following ways for each language:

1. The student can be a native speaker in a language other than English.
2. The student can prove an appropriate level of study of a foreign language from a college transcript. The transcript should show that the student has passed a class at the equivalent level to Brown’s 40-level (advanced-intermediate) foreign language courses.
3. The student can take and pass one of Brown’s “Reading” classes, such as “Reading for German,” or “Reading for French.” These classes are generally offered during the summer.
4. The student can pass a placement exam delivered by the Brown Language Lab. The placement exam used by the lab tests reading, vocabulary, and grammar (rather than listening/speaking). The score of the test should be 474 or higher.

The requirement for research proficiency in one language can be satisfied in one of the following ways:

1. The student may be a native speaker in a language other than English.
2. The student may write a paper in English using multiple primary and secondary sources in the foreign language (cited in the text in the foreign language and translated by the student into English as well). The student must also take a placement test at the Brown Language Lab and score 474 or higher.
3. The student may pass a placement test delivered by the Brown Language Lab with a score of 474 or higher. The student will also pass a 50 level course in language and literature, taught in the foreign language.
4. After passing or being exempted from a 50 level course in language and literature, the student may pass a course at the 100 level or higher conducted in a language other than English.

8) Qualifying Assessment

Qualifying Assessment: An assessment takes place at the completion of every student's third semester, regardless of whether a student entered with a Masters Degree or without. The assessment consists of submission, to the core graduate faculty, of the student's Brown transcript to date (including second semester Fall grades) as well as one term paper of the student's choice, written while at Brown and preferably but not necessarily chosen from a class or independent study taken within the department. Four copies of this material should be submitted by November 15 (assuming all students entered in the Fall and took no leaves of absence) to the DGS. The core graduate faculty will meet to assess each student's progress in the department and evaluate whether or not a student should proceed to the comprehensive exams. In the rare circumstance that a student should not proceed, that student will be awarded an A.M. degree upon the completion of 10 courses but will not progress toward Doctoral study at Brown.

9) Selecting a Committee
At some during the second year of study (and occasionally earlier) a student selects a chair as the first step to selecting a committee of three to oversee the long road to the comprehensive exams and the dissertation defense. A student does not have to have selected a chair prior to the Qualifying Assessment, though a student may have done so. To select a chair, a student asks a member of the core graduate faculty or the field faculty to serve in this function. The selection of the chair is largely at the discretion of the student, though often the student discusses potential choices with the Director of Graduate Studies who serves as the student’s chair until a formal selection is made. A faculty member need not accept a student's request and students should select carefully based on coincidence of scholarly experience and interest. It is best to have taken at least one class with a professor before asking them to chair, though this is not always possible. The chair shepherds the student through the process of comprehensive exams and, ultimately, the dissertation, acting as the student’s advisor and advocate. Once a student has a chair, and at the time that s/he begins preparing for the comprehensive exams, then the student can select members from the faculty who will constitute the student’s Special Committee. The student selects the broader committee together with his or her chair, with an eye toward the requirements of the comprehensive exams and the student’s (and faculty’s) areas of expertise. The committee consists of the chair and two (or three) other professors. Usually, at least two members of the committee are from the core graduate faculty, with the third professor being from core, field, or the university at large. A field faculty member may be chosen as committee chair upon approval of the Director of Graduate Studies. A fourth member may be selected from either inside or outside the university on approval (or insistence) of the Director of Graduate Studies. After the comprehensive exams, if a student needs to alter the committee to accommodate the dissertation, the committee may be amended. When possible, it is best to select a committee that can serve throughout the comprehensive exam and dissertation process. However, we are flexible, and understand that processes are vital and lively and can indeed alter during a course of study.

10) Comprehensive Exams

To qualify for doctoral candidacy, a student will take comprehensive exams. Generally, the exams are taken three to six months after the completion of course work, and conversation about the exams should begin with the committee chair before the last semester of coursework. The exams consist of one general exam on theatre and performance history and three specialized essay exams based on reading lists prepared by the student and augmented and approved by the student’s committee to reflect areas of scholarly interest. These lists will be prefaced by a descriptive statement on the area of the study and the focus of inquiry, and may be accompanied by a set of questions the student will prepare to address. Once the lists are approved (by signature of committee members), the student will commence study. Students should allow at least three months for study of the lists before the exam itself. When the student is ready to take the exam, the committee will construct one question for each list area, and the student will write an essay in response to that question. It is advisable that discussions about the comprehensive exams begin with the student’s chair at least six months in advance of the projected exam date because it takes time to form the appropriate committee for the specialized areas of study, it takes time to adequately develop appropriate bibliographic lists representative of the areas of study, it takes time to have the lists approved, and it takes time to study those lists in preparation for the exams. The written exams are passed in to the committee and then defended orally.
11) Dissertation

Upon passing the comprehensive exams, a scholarly dissertation is required. The dissertation, formatted in either Chicago or MLA style, will be subject to an oral defense. For final touches, see the library link on thesis binding.

12) “Milestones” for Graduate Study in Theatre and Performance Studies at Brown University

This list enumerates the milestones intended as possible but not rigid markers for timely progress in the Doctoral Program in Theatre and Performance Studies at Brown University. Each student’s timeline may differ, and will be determined in consultation with a committee chair and the director of graduate studies in theatre and performance studies. These lists are approximate goals and guidelines.

For students entering with a BA only:

Year 1: Coursework, including required grad seminar and grad colloquia. Recommended six courses over the year. Participation in "Key Text" sessions.

Year 2: Coursework, including required grad seminar and grad colloquia. Qualifying Assessment by November 15. Selection of committee chair after assessment at the start of second semester. Second semester, begin to design comprehensive exam areas with committee chair. A committee should preferably be in place by the end of the second year.

Year 3: Solidification of comprehensive exam lists. Coursework in the Fall, including grad seminar. Comps should be completed by the Spring of the third year. Participation in grad colloquia.


Year Five: Dissertation underway, Participation in grad colloquia.

For students entering with Masters equivalency accepted:

Year 1: Coursework, including required grad seminar and grad colloquia. Recommended six courses over the year. Participation in "Key Text" sessions.

Year 2: Coursework, including required grad seminar and grad colloquia. Qualifying Assessment by November 15. Selection of committee chair after assessment at the start of second semester (if not before). Serious work begun on comprehensive exam areas. Selection of full committee and preliminary comprehensive exam lists by end of Spring semester.

Year 3: Comps in the Fall. If the comps are to be taken in the Spring, courses should be taken in the Fall. Participation in grad colloquia. Language requirement should be completed by this year if possible.
Year Four: Dissertation proposal accepted and Dissertation underway. Participation in grad colloquia.

Year Five: Dissertation writing. Participation in grad colloquia.

13) Graduate Colloquium Series

In addition to a number of public lectures that are open to all Brown students as well as to the Providence community, the graduate faculty of the Department convenes a series of colloquia per academic year that are specifically designed to inform and engage our graduate students. The colloquium, which is attended by faculty and graduate students, and moderated by a graduate student from the department, meets on approximately two Friday afternoons a month throughout the year. The colloquium also sponsors “key text” sessions specially designed for incoming graduate students, as well as workshops on professional development, where faculty coach students in “how to” write proposals, abstracts, conference papers, resumes, job letters, etc. Graduate students are required to attend all of the graduate colloquia sessions, for which they receive no academic credit.

14) Frequently Asked Questions

FAQ for Grad Students can be found on the TAPS website.

Information for doctoral students:

- What is the best schedule for completion of the degree? Or, What are “milestones” for progress?
- What are comprehensive exams? What is expected at a comprehensive exam defense?
- Dissertations:
  - Is a dissertation proposal recommended or required?
  - What is the role of the committee at the dissertation stage?
  - How long is a dissertation?
  - What is expected at a dissertation defense?
  - What is a reasonable time-line from comps to dissertation proposal to completion?
  - At what point in the dissertation writing process can or should a student begin applying for jobs?

What is the best schedule for completion of the degree? Or, What are “milestones” for progress? Look at the “milestones” section for the answer to this question. The milestones are markers to help someone complete in five years. For some, this makes for a very tight schedule. However, we strive to help students finish and earn their degrees in as timely a manner as possible.

What are comprehensive exams? This question is fairly thoroughly answered under Graduate Requirements above. If you have further questions, please contact your advisor.
What is expected at a comprehensive exam defense? A comprehensive exam defense is an oral defense of your exams. The exam generally runs between 1.5 to 2 hours. Chairs of committees design the defense, and thus each defense may vary somewhat. A common defense style is as follows: Everyone gathers. The student is asked to step outside. The committee discusses format and major issues in the essays while the candidate is not in the room (this often takes only a short period of time). The student then reenters and presents for about 10 minutes. Some students discuss the process of writing; some offer a self-evaluation of the argument or a self-assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of individual essays; some address what questions remain. Each student should discuss the opening presentation in advance with his or her advisor. After this, each of the three essays is addressed. The committee poses questions to the student, who answers. Sometimes, all talk together about the issues raised. At the end of the defense, the student will leave the room and the committee will deliberate for a short period of time on the status of the candidate. If a candidate passes, a brief discussion may ensue regarding the candidate’s plan for a dissertation.

Is a dissertation proposal recommended or required? After a student completes his or her comprehensive exams, it is time to research and write the dissertation. Students come to this process in different ways, as do the advisors who chair their committees. Some advisors will require a full dissertation proposal with chapter breakdowns and bibliographies, others will ask for a 2-5 page précis and/or outline and preliminary bibliography. Still others may be content with an abstract and a plan for research and writing. Please be sure to work closely with your advisor to determine the best route for you in moving into the dissertation research and writing phase.

What is the role of the committee at the dissertation stage? A committee is composed of faculty members who will ultimately determine whether or not a dissertation can be passed. As you research and write, you and your advisor should determine the right time to present work in the form of chapters to your committee members for their feedback. Even before chapters are completed, it is a good idea to visit your committee members in office hours or by special appointment to report on your progress and get their advice on question you may have in their area of expertise. It is not a good idea to leave communication with committee members to the very end of the process when you have a completed draft, as you should gain insight from your committee along the way. However, you do not want to over-burden your full committee with drafts unnecessarily. Again, work with your advisor to determine how much and when to present drafted work to your committee. A note: please be sure to allow for four-six weeks turn around time. Professors are often extremely busy, and you cannot expect to give a committee member a chapter and have feedback that same week (though of course, that would be ideal!). You will also want to leave 4-6 weeks for review of an entire dissertation. However, real world deadlines (job awards or post-doctoral fellowships) often cramp the time allotment. Faculty will generally try and be generous about this, but please be courteous in return. Planning is imperative, as is close communication with your committee throughout the process.

How long is a dissertation? Dissertation length varies. Generally, dissertations are between 200 and 300 pages in length.
What is expected at a dissertation defense? A dissertation defense is generally two to three hours long. Chairs of committees design the defense, so each defense may vary. A common defense style is as follows. Everyone gathers. The student is asked to step outside. The committee discusses format and major issues while the candidate is not in the room (this often takes only a short period of time). The student then reenters and presents for about 10 minutes. Some students discuss the process of writing; some offer a self-evaluation of the argument or a self-assessment of the dissertation’s strengths and weaknesses; some address what questions remain. Each student should discuss the opening presentation in advance with his or her advisor. After this, the committee poses questions to the student, who answers. At the end of the defense, the student will leave the room and the committee will deliberate. In most cases, the student will hear after this deliberation whether or not he or she has passed and will be awarded with the PhD, or whether the pass is provisional based on required revisions, or whether the student has not passed (though this last is extremely unlikely given that no defense should happen before a dissertation is basically defensible).

What is a reasonable time-line from comps to dissertation proposal to completion? Of course, student processes vary. A goal should be to produce a proposal (in whatever form is determined with an advisor) as soon as possible after the comps -- ideally within eight weeks. Ideally, as well, research can be completed in one year, and writing in another year. Many students take longer than this, making it difficult to give a simple answer about “reasonable” expectations. Ideal expectations are one thing, but “reasonable” expectations will vary from topic to topic as well as student to student. Every student should try to complete the program within the five years of guaranteed funding, but given the difficulty of this in some cases, it is wise to look for outside funding whenever possible (Brown funding can be deferred if outside funding is secured). There is also the possibility of applying for sixth year funding from Brown.

At what point in the dissertation writing process can or should a student begin applying for jobs? Applying for jobs can be exceedingly time consuming. In general, it is not advisable to begin a job search until three chapters or at least 2/3 of the dissertation is completed and an advisor has approved your progress toward completion. Remember that your committee will be contacted by potential employers to report on your dissertation progress, so you should confer with your advisor about the timing of job applications.