**Comprehensive Portfolio Guidelines**

Department of Geographical Sciences

University of Maryland

**1. Objectives**

The Comprehensive Portfolio in Geographical Sciences is designed to help students develop the required background for doctoral research and demonstrate their readiness to undertake such research. The Comprehensive Portfolio is developed by the student during the pre-candidacy phase of the PhD program. Successful assessment of the Comprehensive Portfolio is required before a student may defend a dissertation proposal. The Comprehensive Portfolio should demonstrate both the breadth and depth of a student's relevant background, and provide a clear indication of their aptitude and readiness for Ph.D. level work. *The portfolio thus provides both a vehicle for self-reflection and a comprehensive record of a doctoral student's experiences and ongoing progress toward his or her academic and professional goals*.

Students will use the process of developing a Comprehensive Portfolio to:

1. Define and clarify academic and professional goals;
2. Formulate specific plans to achieve these goals through coursework, research, and field-based activities;
3. Reflect upon the process and results of their learning activities;
4. Modify goals and plans as needed based on reflective self-evaluation and feedback from faculty advisors; and
5. Demonstrate a readiness to proceed to the next step of the doctoral program: creating and defending a dissertation proposal.

Based on advice from the Graduate Committee, the Graduate Director will appoint the three members of the Portfolio Advising Committee (PAC). The members of the PAC will consist of the student’s tenure/tenured track or research faculty advisor (who will lead the PAC, convene the meetings and provide written assessment reports), plus two other members of the tenured/tenure track faculty. As students progress through the PhD program prior to candidacy, they will meet with their PAC each semester to review goals, plans, and accomplishments, and to discuss possible modifications and additional work needed to facilitate continued progress in the doctoral program.

The end of this process will be a formal Comprehensive Portfolio Assessment, where the PAC evaluates the student's readiness to proceed to the Proposal Development Stage based upon a review of the student’s portfolio, analogous to the traditional doctoral comprehensive exam. Usually the portfolio process precedes the proposal development stage but in exceptional cases and based on the approval of their advisor, the student can form the Doctoral Student Advisory Committee (DSAC) prior to completion of the review of the Comprehensive Portfolio.

**2. Comprehensive Portfolio Timelines**

Upon entry into the graduate program, students are assigned into one of two tracks: those with a master’s degree and a solid background in Geographical Sciences or relevant disciplines, and those with only a bachelor’s degree or an incomplete background in Geographical Sciences. Master’s students may schedule their Comprehensive Portfolio Assessment (see Section 4 below) **anytime**. Bachelor’s students may do so **after the end of their third term of full-time study**. For bachelor’s students, the PAC may suggest the student discontinue graduate study if the 1st year review has raised considerable doubts about the ability of the student to complete the program.

Each semester, the student will meet with their PAC and make an oral presentation on the progress that has been made towards development of their Comprehensive Portfolio. The first PAC meeting will take place during the orientation week in late August prior to the start of the fall semester; the other meetings will normally be scheduled based towards the end of the semester. At these meetings, the students will discuss progress with the members of the PAC, who in turn, will discuss areas where additional progress is needed. After each semi-annual meeting, the PAC will provide the student with a written assessment on the progress the student is making towards development of their Comprehensive Portfolio, and identify areas where improvement is needed in order to pass the Comprehensive Portfolio Assessment. A copy of this semi-annual assessment, signed by all members of the PAC, will be also be submitted to the graduate director.

**3. Comprehensive Portfolio Contents**

The Comprehensive Portfolio should be compiled using a well-designed electronic format that facilitates appropriate organization of materials, provides for easy access to materials, and allows for frequent updating. Each item listed below should be completed by the time of Portfolio Review #1, unless otherwise specified:

1. **Current Vita/Resume**

(see e.g. http://www.careercenter.umd.edu/page.cfm?page\_ID=43&section\_ID=1)

1. **Goal Description**
2. Copy of original Goal Statement from admissions file.
3. Current Goal Statements
4. **Written description** (3-5 pages) **detailing academic goals** (specialization and supporting areas of study), **research goals** (problems, topics, theories, concepts, approaches, interests), and **professional goals.**
5. **Schematic representation of how interests, experiences, and plans fit together into a coherent conceptual framework.** This creative diagram should concisely portray the intellectual substance of evolving identity as a scholar-practitioner.
6. **Coursework Experiences and Plans**
7. **Program of Study** (courses undertaken at UMD as part of the student’s PhD program and a summary of relevant courses successfully completed prior to entering the PhD program).
8. **Self-reflective description of previous and current coursework** in relation to academic, research, and professional goals, as well as the discipline of geography.
9. **Research Experiences and Plans**
10. **Self-reflective description of previous and current research activities and accomplishments** (including research conducted prior to entry into the program). For each activity, note the specific types of competence developed (e.g., literature review, conceptual analysis, theory development, instrument and methods development, data collection, data analysis, research writing, technology applications).
11. **List of competencies for which additional preparation is needed** prior to beginning dissertation work.
12. **Description of planned future research activities.** For each activity, note the specific types of competence you anticipate developing (e.g., literature review, conceptual analysis, theory development, instrument development, data collection, data analysis, research writing, technological applications, etc.).
13. **List of significant research outputs** (e.g., research publications, conference presentations, technical reports, Master’s thesis, major course projects, extended literature reviews, etc.).
14. **Professional Experiences**
15. **List of significant professional products** (e.g.,professional publications and presentations at scientific meetings, workshops, or academic seminars, curriculum materials, software, multimedia projects, examples of innovative or exemplary teaching/counseling, leadership assessment results, etc.).
16. **Evidence of Analytical and Integrative Thinking**
17. List of course papers, extended literature reviews, theoretical analyses, research and professional publications, and other scholarly products providing **evidence of analytical and/or integrative thinking capabilities.** *These materials should collectively demonstrate both breadth and depth of understanding in areas related to your academic and professional goals*. For each item in this list, briefly describe its purpose, substance, and ways in which it required analytical and/or integrative thinking.
18. **Initial Dissertation Planning**
19. Outline of initial thinking/planning for your dissertation research. This "idea paper" should be no more than 5 pages in length. It should address:
20. The real-world problem or concern to be addressed in the dissertation study
21. The kinds of research questions that might be targeted in conducting a study in this area of inquiry.
22. The theories, concepts, research literatures, and methodological approaches that are likely to guide the dissertation study.
23. Areas of expertise that will need to be represented on the dissertation committee.

Note: This part of the portfolio does not represent a proposal defense; therefore this paper does not bind the student to any particular course of research.

1. **Documentation**
2. This section contains copies of written papers and poster papers and presentations the student has made at meetings and workshops. This section should contain copies of the materials listed in previous sections of the Comprehensive Portfolio.

**4. Comprehensive Portfolio Assessment**

In the **Comprehensive Portfolio Assessment** meeting, the focus shifts from academic and professional development to formal evaluation. The purpose of this meeting is to assess the student’s readiness to proceed to the dissertation phase of the doctoral program (analogous to the traditional doctoral comprehensive exam). Discussion will normally center on the following components of the portfolio:

Current Goal Statements  
Research and Professional Competencies for which additional preparation is needed   
Evidence of Analytical and Integrative Thinking   
Initial Dissertation Planning

At the end of the Comprehensive Portfolio Assessment meeting, the student is asked to leave the room, and the Portfolio Advising Committee discusses the student’s progress and performance, and agrees upon one of three possible **Outcomes** that are based upon the evaluation criteria and scoring guidelines in Section 4.1:

**Outcome 1: Pass**

The student has demonstrated readiness to proceed to the dissertation phase of the program and may do so immediately(although non-binding recommendations for modifications or additional work may be specified by the doctoral advising committee); The PAC is disbanded.

**Outcome 2: Conditional Pass**

The student may proceed to the dissertation phase of the program when required actions are completed -- a second meeting is not required, although a deadline for completing the required actions (between 1 month and 12 months from the date of the Comprehensive Portfolio Assessment meeting) must be specified along with precise procedures for verifying that these actions have been completed (non-binding recommendations for modifications or additional work may also be specified by the doctoral advising committee). If the student does not meet the timeline or the actions taken are insufficient, the result of the assessment is changed from Conditional Pass to Fail.

**Outcome 3: Fail**

A second Comprehensive Portfolio Assessment meeting will be scheduled when required actions are completed, with the second meeting scheduled no earlier than one month and no later than 12 months from the date of the first meeting (non-binding recommendations for modifications or additional work may also be specified by the doctoral advising committee).

When the student fails to meet the expectations for the Comprehensive Portfolio Assessment (Outcome 2 or 3), the PAC shall provide the following in writing and a copy provided to the Department Graduate Office:

1. Any actions that the committee *requires* the studentto complete before they are judged to have fully passed the Comprehensive Portfolio Assessment; and
2. A precise deadline for completing these requirements and how new materials are to be evaluated (i.e., by whom and in what context).

**4.1 Evaluation Criteria**

**1. Goal Formulation:**

Statements of professional and academic goals directly relevant to student's proposed program objectives. These statements should go beyond generic statements of program competencies, and apply directly to the student's personal aspirations. Goal statements should be carefully thought out, be directly relevant to the student's academic and professional situation, be realistic, and demonstrate that the student is actively considering his or her own learning and the implications for the future, and not simply "going through the motions" of taking courses and accumulating credits.

**2. Discipline Breadth:**

Student demonstrates the ability to grasp and synthesize core disciplinary concepts and theories, for example, as introduced in Geog600. Student thinks critically and understands problems or texts in a disciplinary (or interdisciplinary) context.

**3. Research Competency**:

Student demonstrates with course papers and other course work proficiency in essential methods and tools pertaining to Geographical Sciences more generally and the chosen dissertation research specifically.

**4. Analytical and Integrative Thinking:**

Student demonstrates with products, and in discussion with committee members, that he or she has engaged in higher order, scholarly thinking that goes beyond attaining understandings required for individual courses. Such thinking may include evaluating components and subcomponents of program courses and activities, and evaluating how each relates to others. This thinking also allows the student to arrive at understandings that go across individual courses and activities to gain broader general understandings relevant to student goals.

**5. Reflective Thinking:**

Student demonstrates skills at self-evaluation with respect to program objectives and goal statements. Student is able to reflect upon different activities, consider student's own products, and appropriately evaluate them, attributing more successful and less successful outcomes appropriately to student efforts, prior understandings, planning, and procedures. Based on this thinking, the student is able to identify how to improve performance and further develop skills and competencies in future endeavors. Reflective thinking should go beyond individual evaluation of products to evaluation of student overall performance in pursuit of academic and professional goals.

**6. Effective Communication:**

Student demonstrates, with products and in discussion with committee members, that they are able to write and speak clearly and at an appropriate level for doctoral study

**4.2 Scoring Rubric and Guidelines**

**Does not meet standards (1 point in scoring rubric)**

*Student does not demonstrate readiness to proceed to the proposal development stage of the doctoral program.*

1. Goal statements are not clear or relevant; evidence for meeting goals is not present.
2. The student does not demonstrate the breadth in the field of geography necessary for advancing to dissertation studies.
3. Research or professional competencies require additional preparation even though the coursework has been completed.
4. The student failed to demonstrate adequate evidence of analytical and integrative thinking in reflecting on the program at the end of coursework, especially with respect to upcoming dissertation work, or on integrity and ethical practice.
5. Student fails to demonstrate an ability for self-evaluation of goals and objectives, projects and writing.
6. Responses to questions are overly general and disorganized, vague, or contain factual errors. Written products disorganized, unfocused and may contain frequent grammatical errors.

**Meets standards (2 points in scoring rubric)**

*Student demonstrates readiness to proceed to the proposal development stage of the doctoral program.*

1. Goal statements are clear and relevant; evidence of goals having been met is present.
2. The student demonstrates adequate breadth in the field of geography necessary for advancing to dissertation studies.
3. Research or professional competencies have been met to an adequate degree of competence. Integrity and ethical practice are evident in research and/or professional activities.
4. The student presents adequate evidence of analytical and integrative thinking in reflecting on the program at the end of coursework, especially with respect to upcoming dissertation work, and on integrity and ethical practice.
5. Student demonstrates ability for self-evaluation of goals and objectives, projects and writing.
6. Responses to question are more general, but still accurate; analyses go beyond the obvious. Written products generally organized and focused, with few grammatical errors, showing good use of figures, citations, etc.

**Exceeds standards (3 points in scoring rubric)**

*Student clearly demonstrates a high degree of readiness to proceed to the proposal development stage of the doctoral program.*

1. Goal statements are clear and relevant; evidence of goals having been met to a high degree of competence may be present.
2. The student demonstrates substantial breadth in the field of geography necessary for advancing to dissertation studies.
3. Research or professional competencies may have been met to a high degree of competence. Integrity and ethical practice are clearly evident in research and/or professional activities.
4. The student demonstrates evidence of excellence in analytical and integrative thinking in reflecting on the program at the end of coursework, especially with respect to upcoming dissertation work integrity and ethical practice.
5. Student demonstrates excellent ability for self-evaluation of goals and objectives, projects and writing.
6. Responses to questions are specific and accurate. Written products well organized and focused with effective use of graphics, citations.

**4.3 Scoring the Comprehensive Portfolio Assessment**

The following Rubric Score Sheet will be used for the Comprehensive Portfolio Assessment

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Score** | | | |
| **Evaluation Category** | **Member 1** | **Member 2** | **Member 3** | **PAC** |
| 1. Goal Formulation |  |  |  |  |
| 1. Discipline Breadth |  |  |  |  |
| 1. Research Competency |  |  |  |  |
| 1. Analytical and Integrative Thinking |  |  |  |  |
| 1. Reflective Thinking |  |  |  |  |
| 1. Effective Communication |  |  |  |  |

Each PAC member will independently score the student’s portfolio in each Evaluation Category (based on the criteria in section 4.2 above:

1 – Does not meet expectations;

2 – Meets expectations;

3 – Exceeds expectations.

The PAC score will be based upon the majority score awarded by two out of three committee members (e.g., if the member scores are 1,1,2, then the PAC score = 1). Note: a scoring of (1,2,3) results in an overall score of 2.5 for a criterion.

**4.3.1 Assigning the outcome of the assessment**

The following is used to assign the outcome of the comprehensive assessment.

*Outcome 1: Comprehensive Portfolio Assessment is passed:*

The student receives a PAC score of 2 or greater in **all 6** Evaluation Criteria.

*Outcome 2: Comprehensive Portfolio Assessment is conditionally passed:*

The student receives a PAC score of 1 in **no more than 2** Evaluation Criteria. If only 1 criterion does not meet expectations the student is conditionally passed. If two criteria do not meet expectations the PAC may choose to place the student in Outcome 3 (fail) depending on the criteria that were not passed and their overall assessment of the student.

*Outcome 3: Comprehensive Portfolio Assessment is failed:*

The student receives a PAC score of 1 in **more than 2** Evaluation Criteria.

* 1. **Discontinuation**

A student who fails their second Comprehensive Portfolio Assessment (i.e. receive Outcome 3 twice) will not be allowed to continue work towards the dissertation. Students in Outcome 2 who fail to satisfy the requirements as given by their PAC in the specified time (and thus receive an Outcome 3) may also be prevented from continuing work towards a dissertation at the discretion of the PAC.

Department of Geographic Sciences

**Comprehensive Portfolio Assessment Summary**

**The primary purpose of this meeting is to assess the student’s readiness to proceed to the dissertation phase of the doctoral program.**

**Student’s Name \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ G#\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**First semester in the program\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_** **Current semester \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Portfolio URL\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

The comments below summarize REQUIRED and RECOMMENDED actions to be taken as a result of Portfolio Review #3 (use back of this page if more space is needed):

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Areas | **Member 1** | **Member 2** | **Member3** | **PAC** |
| **Goal Formulation** |  |  |  |  |
| **Discipline Breadth** |  |  |  |  |
| **Research competency** |  |  |  |  |
| **Analytical and Integrative Thinking** |  |  |  |  |
| **Reflective thinking** |  |  |  |  |
| **Effective communication** |  |  |  |  |

Each PAC member will independently score the student’s portfolio in each Evaluation Category:

1 – Does not meet expectations;

2 – Meets expectations;

3 – Exceeds expectations.

The PAC score will be based upon the majority score awarded by two out of three committee members (e.g., if the member scores are 1,1,2, then the PAC score = 1). Note: a scoring of (1,2,3) results in an overall score of 2.5 for a criterion (i.e., should be higher than a 1,2,2, scoring).

**The results of the comprehensive assessment are summarized below (check one):**

**\_\_\_\_\_ Student has demonstrated readiness to proceed to the dissertation phase of the program (non-binding recommendations for modifications or additional work may be specified on the back of this page).**

**\_\_\_\_\_ Student may proceed to the dissertation phase of the program when required actions are completed; a second meeting is not required (a deadline and precise procedures for verifying completion of these actions must be specified on the back of this page [deadline cannot extend beyond 12 months from the date of the first meeting]; non-binding recommendations for modifications or additional work may also be specified).**

**\_\_\_\_\_ A second comprehensive assessment meeting will be scheduled when required actions are completed (the second meeting cannot be held later than 12 months from the date of the first meeting; non-binding recommendations for modifications or additional work may also be specified).**

**Summary of candidate’s strengths:**

**Summary of candidate’s areas in need of improvement:**

**Signatures**

**Student Date**

**Chair, Doctoral Advising Committee (print last name) Date**

**Doctoral Advising Committee (print last name) Date**

**Doctoral Advising Committee (print last name) Date**

**Director, Ph.D. in Education Program Date**