

Appendix B

Binghamton University
Sociology Department
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GUIDELINES FOR THE DEMONSTRATION OF COMPETENCE

The purpose of the Demonstration of Competence is to construct the broad fields of inquiry that will form the context of the student's future research and teaching. Unlike the dissertation, which presents research in order to answer specific questions, the area

display – through written work and oral presentation – a working knowledge and understanding of the chosen fields.

In general, a specific field (or area) begins with a challenging intellectual problem or question. The candidate must define the parameters of the two separate fields that are neither too broad (i.e., encompassing more than can reasonably be considered a specialized area of research and teaching) nor too narrow (i.e., restricting the focus to a highly specialized topic or issue). The candidate must be prepared to defend the chosen definition, scope, and coherence of the field.

Area papers generally start with an exposition of what the topic is and why it is worth writing about. The student should then review the literature that she thinks will serve as the essential building blocks of her field, and conclude with a discussion of how this review/ critique/ perspective helps in understanding the world, in evaluating the relevant literature, and in pursuing research. The student should bear in mind that an area paper is not meant to be an exhaustive treatment of the field, but a mapping of the terrain and a determination of the direction one would like to take in a continuing exploration. (Titles of articles in the *Annual Review of Sociology* may offer some indication of the scope of a field.) The research, thinking, and writing of each area paper should ordinarily take no longer than six months. The student would be expected to defend both areas, submit a dissertation prospectus, and earn ABD status within eighteen months of course completion.

The two fields must be substantively and analytically distinct. One field *may* be defined in terms of temporal-spatial boundaries of historical analysis. It is not, however, appropriate to define both fields in this manner. For each separate field of inquiry, the student is asked to present (1) an *analytical overview of the area*

If the faculty committee decide that the candidate has not yet demonstrated competence in the chosen field(s), they will suggest what kinds of further evidence (whether written or not) would be necessary to complete this stage of advancement toward the PhD degree. The