PhD DISSERTATION PROSPECTUS CHECKLIST
(Adapted from: Health Studies and Gerontology Graduate Student Handbook, University of Waterloo)

1. **Title of Dissertation**
   a) Is the title clear, simple to follow and self-explanatory?
   b) Have you included the department, month and date on your title page?

2. **Abstract** (optional for prospectus; consult your supervisor)

3. **Table of Contents** (A Table of Tables and Table of Figures may also be included, as appropriate)
   a) Have you included the heading and page number of all major sections?

4. **Introduction and Overview** (recommend: 3 – 4 pages)

   The purpose of this section is to introduce the topic, generate interest in reading the prospectus and provide a rationale for the research. Describe the research statement, summarize selected literature and state the purpose of the study.

   a) Have you oriented the reader to the main theme of the dissertation through a general introduction?

   b) Have you created interest in the topic of the dissertation?

   c) Have you given a brief overview of the main sections and ideas of the prospectus?

   d) Have you written a transition paragraph from the introduction to the literature review?

5. **Theoretical Section** (recommend: 8 – 15 pages, depending on dissertation style and supervisor)

   This section will provide the conceptual and theoretical rationale for your research. The extent of the theoretical section depends on the type of dissertation and research questions being addressed.

   a) Have you covered the relevant theory with a critical perspective?

   b) Have you explained how it is relevant to your study?

   c) Does the theory inform your study?

   d) Does your theory rationalize your hypothesis?
6. **Literature Review** (recommend: 10 – 20 pages depending on dissertation style and supervisor)

   Organize the literature review in a clear and systematic way. Avoid merely stating what other people have said without providing your own interpretive summary and critical analysis. Identify gaps in knowledge and how your dissertation will fill them. Use primary sources (original articles) as much as possible.

   a) Have you included key references and sources for your review?
   
   b) Have you synthesized and integrated the literature in a meaningful way? Where appropriate, tables or figures may be used in the text or appended.
   
   c) Have you shown how the existing literature relates to your research study question(s)?
   
   d) Have you avoided merely repeating what others have said or shown, without any organization or critical analysis?
   
   e) Have you clearly described how your study addresses gaps in the field?
   
   f) Have you clearly stated the overall and specific purposes of your study in terms of study questions, hypotheses or issues that will be addressed?
   
   g) Have you shown what the scholarly implications are (theoretical or practical) of your proposed study?

7. **Methods** (recommend: 10 – 12 pages of text)

   This is one of the most important sections of your prospectus. Regardless of whether you are proposing to collect new data (in either a laboratory or field setting) and/or perform secondary analysis of existing data sets, it is important that you describe your proposed methods clearly.

   a) Have you described the basic design or protocol you propose to use (or which was used to collect the data) in relation to your study questions (including advantages and limitations of this approach)? Diagrams are often helpful to illustrate protocols.
   
   b) Have you described in detail sample recruitment and selection criteria (including sample size calculations for statistical power when applicable)?
   
   c) Have you considered issues of obtaining approval from participating agencies (if applicable), approval from the Simon Fraser University Office of Research Ethics and informed consent from study participants? Append draft consent forms if possible.
   
   d) Have you described in detail the data collection procedures. Have you described all measures? Append a description of the tools (or the tools themselves if in questionnaire form).

   Have you explained how you will analyze the findings? Regardless of whether the data are quantitative or qualitative or both (mixed-methods), you need to justify your choice of analytic procedures (statistical tests, verification procedures, etc).
8. **Reference List**
   
a) Have you checked that the references are accurate?

b) Have you included all the references (and only the references) cited in the text?

c) Have you followed an accepted reference style (e.g. American Psychological Association) consistently throughout your text and list?

9. **Appendices**
   
a) Have you placed supporting documentation in the appendices (e.g. tables summarizing prior studies, program information, proposed tools, assay procedures, draft of human research ethics approval forms, clearance for biohazards etc.)?

b) Have you titled each appendix and lettered consecutively (A, B, C, etc.) in the same order as cited in the text?

**Page Recommendations:** These are guidelines only. However, a doctoral dissertation prospectus should be 30 – 50 pages, excluding references and appendices.

**HAVE YOU CAREFULLY PROOF READ ALL SECTIONS OF YOUR PROSPECTUS PRIOR TO SUBMISSION?**