1. What Was Done?
4 doctoral students sat for oral comprehensive examinations and 5 doctoral students sat for written comprehensive examinations. 6 doctoral students defended final dissertations.

2. What Data Were Collected?
Pass rates were collected to assess the program. All students who sat for comprehensive examinations passed both the written and oral exams, leading to a 100% pass rate. All 6 doctoral students who defended their final dissertations passed, leading to a 100% pass rate.

3. What Was Learned?
Through this process, we reviewed how we organized the doctoral comprehensive exams. In some cases, there was too much time between the exam and the student taking the next step to bringing forth a proposal for the dissertation/research topic and study. Some students felt that they “floundered” and were unsure of how to move from comprehensive exam to proposal writing. We felt that students would have greater efficacy in the research process and a shorter “time to degree” if we reorganized comprehensive exams and the subsequent proposal meetings to occur together.

4. How We Responded?
We wanted to utilize the comprehensive exam as a launching point for students’ research and dissertation, so scheduled the exam and proposal meetings for back-to-back time slots. This gave us an opportunity to hold the written and oral exams, and then immediately engage with students about their dissertation topics and research proposals.

We also changed the format for written comprehensive exams to include two major questions that aligned more to their proposed research topic. The first question would be a literature review and analysis of the particular topic of study the student was choosing for the dissertation. The second question would ask the student to operationalize his/her hypothetical research question using both quantitative and qualitative research methods.

Changing the comprehensive exam format and the content of the questions for the comprehensive exam have made for a more seamless process for students as they progress through the latter stages of their doctoral programs.