



**School of Behavioral Sciences  
Doctor of Education  
Community Care & Counseling  
Dissertation Handbook**

This handbook is a guide to the dissertation process for Liberty University School of Behavioral Science Community Care and Counseling doctoral students. It does not constitute a contract and is subject to change at the discretion of Liberty University School of Behavioral Sciences. This version of the dissertation handbook supersedes all previous versions.

2022 – 2023

## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1 Introduction to the Dissertation Process**

The Ed.D. program in the School of Behavioral Sciences (SBS) consists of two primary components: the coursework and the dissertation. This handbook is to help students know what to expect in the dissertation process. The student completes the program's coursework to develop and hone critical thinking skills, writing skills, and discipline-specific academic knowledge while the dissertation is the final academic requirement for the Ed.D. The dissertation evaluates the doctoral candidate's capabilities as a scholar. It culminates the Ed.D. degree program and demonstrates the student's capacity to commit deeply to the exploration of professionally relevant topics.

### **1.2 Purpose of this Handbook**

The purpose of this handbook is to clarify the dissertation process. The handbook is a guide for the dissertation, including the writing, the proposal defense, and the final dissertation. In general terms, the roles and responsibilities of the candidate, the chair, and the committee member are outlined.

Because the completed dissertation is a publication of Liberty University (LU) and represents the university, the department, and the author, candidates are expected to maintain high standards concerning the content and appearance of dissertations. Thus, another purpose of this handbook is to provide directives and standards about the content and style of the dissertation manuscript.

## **2. Academic Policies and Specialized Coursework**

There are several academic policies that are utilized specifically for the doctoral programs in the SBS. Some of the policies are dependent on the specific degree completion plan (DCP) the student is working under. More information about these policies is detailed below.

### **2.1 Limit for Times Registered for EDCO 988 and EDCO 989**

Students are only allowed to register for EDCO 988 three times before successful completion of an approved proposal. In addition, students have a limit of three times registering for EDCO 989. Exceeding either of the limits could result in removal from the program. If the registration limit is exceeded, students who wish to continue in the program must submit a formal appeal to [edcodissertations@liberty.edu](mailto:edcodissertations@liberty.edu) to request an extension. Each student must include a full justification of the request and if applicable, documentation evidencing his or her dissertation Chair's support of the extension. If the appeal for an extension is approved, the Program Chair will determine the new deadline for program completion. Any student who does not complete coursework within the permissible time limit for any reason, including discontinued enrollment, must reapply for admission. If students wish to continue in the program at a later date, they need to reapply and if accepted, will be subject to all requirements for the DCP for the current academic year.

## **2.2 Continuous Enrollment Policy**

During the dissertation phase, the student is expected to remain continually enrolled in the program, registering for EDCO 988 every semester (Fall, Spring, and Summer) until their dissertation proposal is successfully defended. Students must also register for EDCO 989 every semester (Fall, Spring, and Summer) until their final dissertation defense (i.e. EDCO 990) is scheduled.

## **2.3 Relevant Research Courses**

Several research-related courses are directly related to the dissertation development process. Please be aware that these courses must be taken at Liberty in the SBS Ed.D. Program. Doctoral-level equivalents from other universities will not be accepted.

EDCO 716: Dissertation Topic

EDCO 770: Dissertation Formation

EDCO 900: Dissertation Design and Proposal

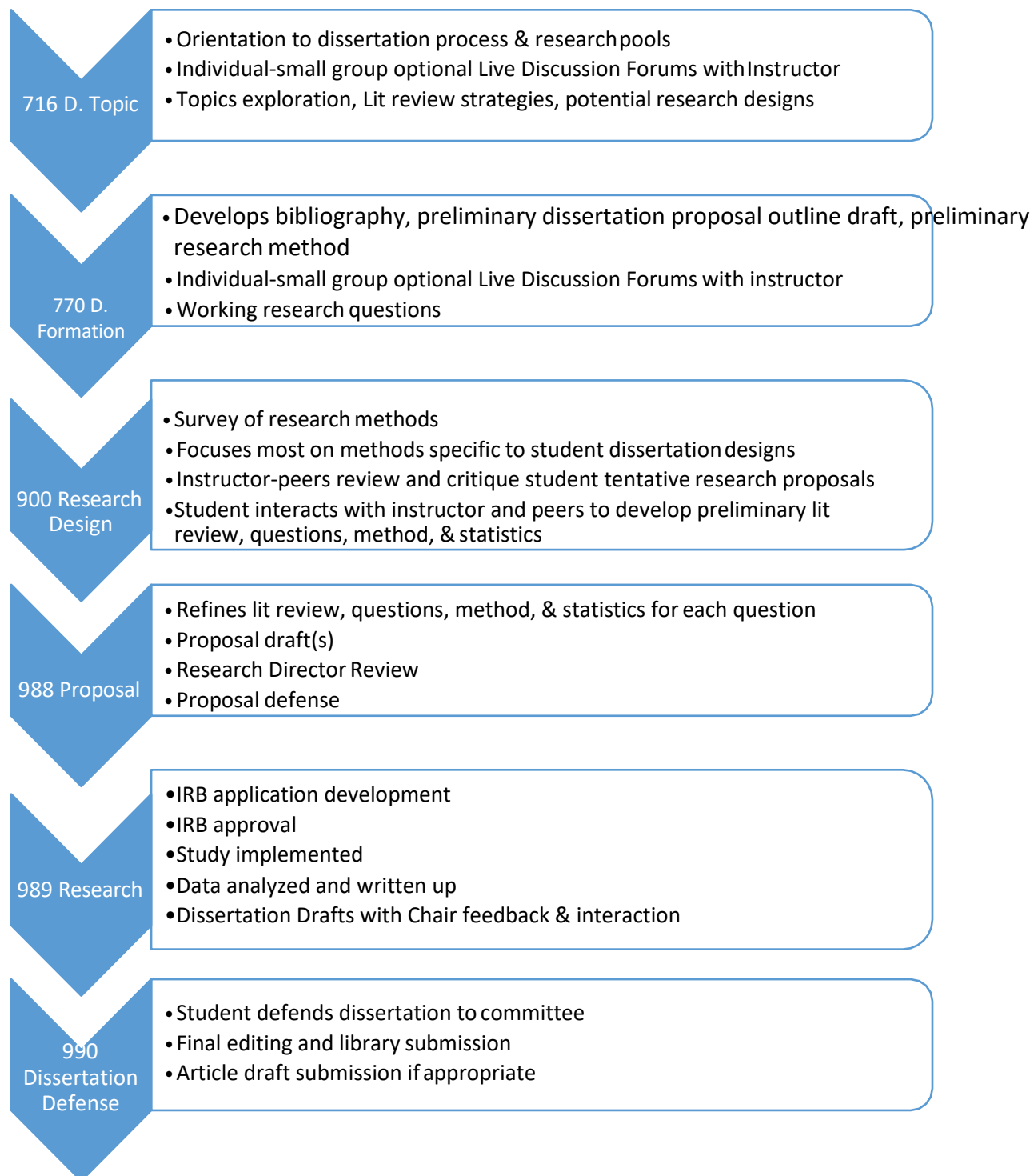
EDCO 988: Dissertation Proposal and Research

EDCO 989: Dissertation Writing and Research

EDCO 990: Dissertation Defense

The next page contains a flow chart that briefly describes the purpose of each course in the progression:

## SBS EdD Dissertation Process



### **3. Doctoral Candidacy**

#### **3.1 Core Classes (Candidacy Approval)**

Upon passing the Ed.D.'s Core, Cognate and Pre-dissertation courses, the student will be considered a doctoral candidate. Doctoral candidates remaining tasks include successfully writing and defending their dissertation proposal, applying for IRB approval, collecting, and analyzing data, writing, and successfully defending their dissertation.

#### **3.2 Comprehensive Exam**

As of Spring 2019, the Comprehensive Exam (EDCO 865) requirement has been waived. If you still see it listed on your Degree Completion Plan Audit, please contact your Academic Evaluator.

### **4. Choosing a Dissertation Committee**

Students will be assigned a Dissertation Chair and Reader for their committee via the Dissertation Pairing Form (DPF). The Dissertation Pairing Form is located in Week 4 in EDCO 900. Students may provide input in this process. The dissertation committee must include the following:

1. A Chair who has an earned doctoral degree (Ed.D., Psy.D., or Ph.D.) in a counseling/psychology/pastoral care/marriage & family or other related field and is employed by LU (residential or online);
2. A Reader who serves as a committee member and has an earned doctoral degree (Ed.D., Psy.D., or Ph.D.) in a counseling/psychology/pastoral care/marriage & family or other related field and is employed by LU (faculty or adjunct). With Program Chair approval, a specialized subject expert not employed by Liberty may be considered.

See [Appendix A](#), Dissertation Committee Qualifications and Responsibilities, for more details.

### **5. Dissertation Guidelines**

#### **5.1 Dissertation Style**

Broadly speaking, the dissertation is a scholarly document written for professionals in a specific field of study. A dissertation typically ranges from 80 to 200 pages of text and contains a thorough literature review that is typically 30 to 75 pages in length depending on the topic and amount of previous research.

The dissertation needs to follow the most recent edition of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA). All APA guidelines should be followed; however, the formatting guidelines and the templates for the dissertation outlined in this handbook (See [Appendix D](#) for the Quantitative Dissertation Template and [Appendix E](#) for the Qualitative Dissertation Template). With the approval of the Dissertation Chair, the personal pronoun I may be used judiciously in the candidate's manuscript and only in accordance with APA guidelines.

It is highly recommended that candidates retain their textbooks from their previous statistics and research methods courses (both quantitative and qualitative) as these can be very useful guides in the development of their project and identification of appropriate analyses to use.

## **5.2 Dissertation Research Topics**

Students should start considering future dissertation topics from the very beginning of their program. When opportunities exist, students should research the topic of interest in the form of related papers for doctoral coursework. A research topic area is not the same as a dissertation research study, although it can lead to one. A topic is general in nature whereas a dissertation research study is very narrow in focus with defined methods to answer a particular question(s). Candidates are encouraged to pursue dissertation topics that are of personal relevance and significance; however, a candidate needs to ensure that the topic is researchable and related to the field. Ideally, the research topic should be within the expertise and research interests of potential Dissertation Chairs.

It is important to avoid topics that are overly ambitious, challenging, and esoteric, thus ensuring that the dissertation process results in successful completion. Faith integration within the dissertation is welcomed. Students are also encouraged to participate in research teams, conference presentations, and writing projects with Ed.D. faculty and adjuncts whenever possible to gain valuable experience. This is especially important if the student has a goal of being a full-time professor one day.

## **5.3 Dissertation Research Designs**

Dissertations may consist of various research designs; however, students should consider their career goals as a component of developing their design. In this program, it is highly recommended that all dissertations should be conducted utilizing either a quantitative or qualitative research design.

It is further (highly) recommended that quantitative studies follow one of the following designs: 1). Experimental; 2). Quasi-experimental; 3). Archival research; 4). Survey research, or 5). Content analysis.

Students who plan on using a qualitative design should use either 1). Phenomenology (Transcendental phenomenology or Hermeneutic phenomenology) or 2). Case study for their research method/approach.

## 5.4 Academic Honesty

Honesty and integrity are highly valued at Liberty University. The same principles and expectations of academic honesty and integrity in coursework and the comprehensive examination are true for the dissertation. The Liberty Way details specific definitions, penalties, and processes of reporting. The presence of plagiarism, including structural plagiarism, within any dissertation manuscript or document may result in dismissal from the program, failing the dissertation course, and/or implementation of an intervention plan. The Dissertation Chair and the SBS administration decide the final consequences of academic dishonesty.

It is recognized that the dissertation needs to be an original work of the candidate, and the re-use of previous research (e.g., master's theses, publications) is not acceptable. All previous work needs to be cited according to current APA guidelines. Properly crediting another individual's work is also an ethical imperative.

## 6. The Dissertation Proposal Process

### 6.1 Preliminary Proposal Work

In EDCO 716, EDCO 770, and EDCO 900, students will interact with course instructors and complete a sequence of assignments specifically designed to help them develop a working proposal draft. The working proposal draft will contain key elements of the complete proposal draft which will be completed in EDCO 988. See the course syllabi for these courses for specific information on the related assignments. Please see [Appendix C](#) for an outline of the dissertation process after EDCO 900.

### 6.2 Dissertation Pairing Form (DPF)

The Dissertation Pairing Form (DPF) is located in week 4 of EDCO 900. If the student has previously completed EDCO 900 (or EDCO 810) and they have successfully completed all required coursework, the student should reach out [edcodissertations@liberty.edu](mailto:edcodissertations@liberty.edu) to receive a link to the DPF. The DPF is a Graduate School mandated process in which you will be paired with your dissertation chair.

## 7. EDCO 988: The Dissertation Proposal

### 7.1 Develop the Proposal & Schedule the Proposal Defense

After successful completion of EDCO 900, candidates enroll in EDCO 988 in the Chair's section. The Chair interacts with the candidate to develop the proposal draft document. EDCO 988 is not a typical 8-week course with weekly assignments. It is an A term course (full semester) and candidates must enroll in it continuously until their dissertation proposal is completed and successfully defended (i.e., more than one semester of 988 may be taken when necessary).

The proposal draft consists, at a minimum, of the following: Title Page, Abstract, Table of Contents, Chapter One: Introduction, Chapter Two: Literature Review, Chapter Three: Methods,

References, and Appendices with instruments, participant letters, and Institutional Review Board (IRB) applications. The proposal is approximately 50-70 pages in length, with a minimum length of 30 pages for the literature review (Chapter Two). See [Appendix D](#) for the Quantitative Dissertation Template and [Appendix E](#) for the Qualitative Dissertation Template.

The Chair always reviews the proposal manuscript first and spends the most time with students on the development of the document. A review by the chair and the reader may take up to two weeks depending upon the length and quality of the manuscript. The candidate should expect that the proposal manuscript will potentially go through multiple revision cycles with the Chair before the proposal is approved for the proposal defense.

During the lapse of time between the near final review and the Chair's/Reader's feedback, the candidate may begin work on the IRB application **without submitting it** (see [8.1](#)). The candidate can also work on obtaining any research site permissions to conduct the research if these have not already been obtained **without recruiting any actual participants** (i.e., get the organizations' approvals to conduct the study without any beginning solicitation of participants to the study, see [8.1](#)). For example, a candidate wants to use a church congregation in the study. The candidate gets the permission of the pastor to use the congregation without actually starting to recruit any participants.

At the Chair's discretion, a professional edit of the proposal document for writing style and APA format may be requested. When the Chair is satisfied with the proposal, the Chair sends the proposal manuscript to the Reader or asks candidates to provide a copy of the proposal manuscript to the Reader for feedback. The Reader carefully examines the proposal to provide the scientific safeguard of peer review. This gives additional input on whether candidates are ready for their defense and any potential adjustments needed in the study. When the Chair and Reader agree, the proposal defense is scheduled (see [7.3](#)) and the proposal document is put through Turnitin (on the setting so the document is not added to the Turnitin database). This allows both the candidate and committee can be alerted to any areas needing adjustment in the proposal to avoid plagiarism.

Prior (ten calendar days) to the proposal defense, the chair must submit a clean, edited, final proposal document to [edcodissertations@liberty.edu](mailto:edcodissertations@liberty.edu) for a Research Director Review (RDR). In most cases, the proposal defense should not occur until the Research Director has approved the manuscript.

The proposal defense occurs at the end of EDCO 988.

## 7.2 What to do if there are Problems with Your Chair or Committee

If the Chair exceeds two weeks for a manuscript review cycle, contact the Chair to get an update on when the review will be completed. If the Chair becomes unresponsive or the delay seems unreasonable, candidates should contact the Ed. D. Program Administrative Team at [edcodissertations@liberty.edu](mailto:edcodissertations@liberty.edu). The same principle applies with the Reader. If there are concerns that cannot be resolved with the committee, contact the Ed. D. Program Administrative Team.



### 7.3 The Proposal Defense

The formal proposal defense normally takes place via the university's e-conferencing system (WebEx or Microsoft Teams). The Chair, Reader, and candidate collaborate on setting the date and time. Once a date and time are established, the Chair sends a meeting request in Outlook to document the date and time for the committee and doctoral candidate. Keep in mind that the RDR must occur prior to the proposal defense date.

The Chair and candidate are strongly encouraged to have a "test proposal defense" run-through on WebEx/Teams at least two days prior to the dissertation defense in order to ensure that the technology works properly on the computers and phones that will be used on the day of the defense. Only the candidate is required share video through WebEx during the defense.

The formal dissertation proposal defense is normally about 60 minutes in length. After prayer and preliminary remarks by the chair, the candidate presents the proposal. The proposal presentation needs to include the following: a description of the study's purpose and significance, the research question(s) and hypothesis (es) (if quantitative), and the methods (including the plans for the research design and analysis). The presentation is approximately 15 minutes. The proposal defense follows the following outline:

- Introductions and welcome (Chair)
- Opening prayer (Chair)
- 15-minute presentation using PowerPoint or other appropriate software (Candidate)
- Candidate responds to questions and comments from the committee
- Dismissal of the candidate for committee deliberation
- The Chair contacts the candidate shortly with the committee decision and any required revisions

A maximum of two proposals may be defended. Failure to successfully defend within two successive proposals could result in removal from the program or remediation (e.g., enrollment in additional coursework) before progression in the dissertation process. This decision is made by the Program Chair in consultation with the dissertation committee; the Chair will notify the department via the [edcodissertations@liberty.edu](mailto:edcodissertations@liberty.edu) email immediately upon the candidate successfully Proposal Defense

Once the proposal has been approved, significant changes cannot be made without the approval of the Chair.

### 8. EDCO 989: Institutional Review Board (IRB) Process

EDCO 989 is not a typical 8-week course with weekly assignments. It is an A term course (full semester) and candidates must enroll in it continuously until their dissertation is completed (i.e., more than one semester of 989 may be taken when necessary). In EDCO 989, candidates do the following:

1. Complete the IRB application
2. Receive IRB approval for their study

3. Collect data/implement their study
4. Analyze the results of their study
5. Develop dissertation document draft(s) based on their Committee's feedback.

## 8.1 IRB Application

After completion of a successful proposal defense, candidates must make application to and be approved by Institutional Review Board (IRB) before any participants may be recruited or data may be collected. IRB is a federally mandated body established to ensure ethical treatment of human subjects. Within 10 business days of the approved proposal defense, the candidate must submit his or her IRB application and ancillary material through the LU IRB process. The application can be worked on prior to the defense but not submitted. The proposal defense needs to be completed prior to application's submission for IRB review.

Candidates must develop their IRB application and ancillary material using the application and templates retrieved directly from [the LU IRB website](#). Candidates must not use older applications or templates. Candidates must submit documentation of institutional permission from each research site to the IRB prior to receiving IRB approval. If study procedures will involve schools or school districts, permission should come in the form of a letter or email, but if study procedures involve colleges or universities other than LU, IRB approval from those institutions will need to be obtained as directed by the specific institution's IRB.

If the study will include LU faculty, students, or staff from a *single* department within LU the candidate must obtain permission from the appropriate supervisor (e.g., Dean ). A signed letter or date/time stamped email to verify approval to use students from that group or department should be addressed and sent to the candidate; the candidate should then attach the approval to her/his IRB application. The candidate may submit the IRB application without having obtained this permission; however, the IRB will not give final approval of the study until proof of permission has been received.

If the study will include faculty, students, or staff from *multiple* departments (for example, SBS and the School of Education) or groups within LU (i.e., all sophomores in LU's undergraduate online program), the IRB will seek administrative approval on the candidate's behalf. Note that such administrative approval for such broad samples can take substantial time. It is recommended to use single departments whenever possible. Candidates should NOT contact the Provost's office directly.

Permission from the research sites may be sought prior to submitting the LU IRB application. If a candidate is unable to gain permission from the research sites prior to receiving IRB approval from LU, LU's IRB will issue a conditional approval letter, which will assist in obtaining needed permission and in subsequently completing IRB approval. Candidates must not begin recruiting participants until after receiving full IRB approval. The IRB application, ancillary material, and documentation of site permission(s) are submitted as e-mailed attachments to LU's IRB, [irb@liberty.edu](mailto:irb@liberty.edu)

Candidates should refer to approval timeframes on the LU IRB website. Modification requests to the application should be expected during the IRB's review process. Candidates should take care to thoroughly review the LU IRB website and incorporate all of the IRB's feedback in a timely manner to avoid delays. Execution of research CANNOT begin prior to receiving IRB full approval (i.e., one cannot begin recruiting participants with conditional approval). **If data are collected or accessed prior to obtaining all necessary and full IRB approvals, the candidate will be removed from the program.**

Once IRB approval is obtained, the Chair must forward the IRB approval letter, which includes the IRB approval number, to [edcodissertations@liberty.edu](mailto:edcodissertations@liberty.edu). The candidate will also include a copy of the IRB approval as an appendix in the final dissertation.

## **9. EDCO 989: Developing the Dissertation**

### **9.1 Execute the Research**

After IRB approval is given and all necessary consents (adults) and/or assents (minors) are obtained from participants, candidates execute their research, including data collection and analysis. Candidates should note that depending on their level of comfort, ability, and competence with the chosen quantitative or qualitative analyses, they may seek an outside statistics or qualitative research consultant. However, candidates are held responsible to comprehend fully and to answer for the procedures, accuracy, statistical/qualitative interpretation, ethics, and integrity of the research design and analysis. In other words, candidates must be able to respond to committee questions about all aspects of their studies.

### **9.2 Create the Final Dissertation Manuscript**

Under the guidance of the Chair, the candidate refines Chapters One through Three and writes Chapters Four and Five. The Chair may advise the candidate to seek guidance from the Reader or another faculty member on specific aspects of the study.

The Quantitative and Qualitative Dissertation Templates are provided as appendices (Appendices [D](#) and [E](#)). A typical dissertation is around 80-200 pages in length. It includes all the elements of a full dissertation. There should be a minimum of 80 pages of text for the quantitative dissertation and 120 pages of text for the qualitative dissertation.

The Chair always reviews the manuscript first. When the Chair is satisfied with the manuscript and has given approval, the Chair disseminates the manuscript (or chapters) or asks the candidate to provide a copy of the manuscript (or chapters) to the Reader for feedback. The candidate should expect that the manuscript (or chapters) will go through multiple revisions before being approved for a dissertation defense and that a review may take between two to four weeks depending upon the length and quality of the manuscript.

### **9.3 Submit the Dissertation Manuscript for a Professional Edit**

During the final revision process, a professional edit of the manuscript **is required**. The professional edit can be performed prior to or after the defense at the discretion of the Chair based on the quality of the manuscript. This requirement may include a full edit or may simply be an APA edit. Candidates may use any professional editor and are responsible for the cost of this service.

## 10. EDCO 990: Defending the Dissertation

The Chair decides when the manuscript is finished and ready for defense. Upon the Chair's approval and notification to the department, the candidate may be registered for EDCO 990. If a candidate is originally enrolled in EDCO 989 because it was not certain they would defend, they should complete the CRC and all assignments as usual until the time that they will move from EDCO 989 in order to enroll in EDCO 990. A final defense cannot be scheduled unless the candidate is enrolled in EDCO 990.

The Chair will submit the dissertation document through Turnitin. This allows both the candidate and committee to be alerted to any areas needing adjustment in the dissertation to avoid plagiarism.

Candidates, with input and approval from their Chair, may choose to conduct the final defense through distance means or as a traditional, on-campus defense. If the Chair or Reader are at a distance, they may attend the defense via the university e-conferencing system, WebEx or Teams for Business, even if the candidate is defending on-campus. If a distance defense is chosen, the Chair is responsible for scheduling and facilitating the WebEx meeting. The dissertation support staff provides the chair with information about conducting the defense via the e-conferencing system, if needed.

The Chair, Reader, and candidate collaborate on setting the date and time. Once a date and time are established, the Chair sends a meeting request in Outlook to document the date and time for the committee and doctoral candidate. Candidates are responsible to complete the **Dissertation Announcement Template** and send the completed form to [edcodissertations@liberty.edu](mailto:edcodissertations@liberty.edu) (including the Chair in the cc line). The defense date must be scheduled and the defense successfully completed at least four weeks prior to the last day of the semester. If the option of an on-campus defense is chosen, candidates must not make travel arrangements prior to receiving the Outlook appointment.

### 10.1 Preparing for the Dissertation Defense

The candidate is responsible for providing the final copy of the dissertation manuscript to the committee members approximately two weeks prior to the dissertation defense. The candidate prepares a 15-20 minute presentation of the dissertation for the defense; a visual presentation (e.g., PowerPoint or other software) is required. The presentation should be sent to the Chair and Reader at least one week prior to the defense.

If the defense occurs on campus, the candidate should bring the presentation to the defense on a laptop and a USB drive. Candidates may arrive at the defense room 30 minutes ahead of time to set up for the defense.

For distance defenses, candidates are required to use a webcam, have reliable internet and phone connections, be in professional dress, be in a professional location, and have technological support on hand, if needed, to ensure the distance defense runs smoothly. WebEx or Teams for

Business must be used for distance defenses, and the Chair is responsible for setting up the WebEx/Teams meeting. The chair and candidate are required to have a “test defense” run-through on WebEx/Teams at least two days prior to the dissertation defense in order to ensure that the technology works properly on the computers and phones that will be used on the day of the defense. Only the candidate is required share video through WebEx/Teams during the defense.

## 10.2 The Dissertation Defense

The dissertation defense takes approximately one hour to complete. The only people who should attend a defense are the candidate, the dissertation committee, LU faculty members, and SBS doctoral students. The following procedures are recommended:

- Welcome and introductions of the committee and candidate (Chair)
- Opening prayer (Chair)
- 15-20 minute presentation by candidate
- Questions and comments from the Reader and Chair
- Questions and comments from the SBS Faculty
- Dismissal of candidate for committee deliberation
- Re-connection with candidate for decision and discussion of revisions, as applicable
- Final remarks

After prayer and preliminary remarks by the chair, the candidate gives the defense presentation. The presentation needs to include the following: an overview of the study’s purpose and significance (both practical and empirical), the method, the analysis, the results, limitations, discussion of the findings, and suggestions for future research. The presentation should be used as an aid. Reading from the presentation or script is not acceptable and may result in an unsuccessful defense.

Following the defense presentation, the Reader and chair will ask questions. Then attending faculty will be provided the opportunity to ask questions. Following questions and discussion, all individuals not on the committee, including the candidate, will exit the room to provide the committee the opportunity to discuss the defense. Using the Ed.D. Dissertation Defense Rubric for guidance, the committee will make a decision (per Appendix B defense rubric). The candidate is invited back into the room (virtual or in person), and the chair will inform the candidate of the outcome. The committee makes one of the following decisions:

- Approved with no or minor revisions
- Provisionally approved with major revisions

- Not approved with recommendation to revise dissertation or write a new dissertation

If the committee makes one of the first two decisions, the chair delineates the required steps and specifies a timeline for completion (usually 7-15 days). It should be noted that, at the discretion of the chair and dependent upon the number of revisions that need to be made, the chair may require that that candidate have his or her manuscript professionally edited again.

A maximum of two dissertation defenses may be completed. Failure to defend successfully within two defenses will result in removal from the program.

### **11. Posting the EDCO 990 Grade, Publication, and Graduation**

Upon approval from the Chair, the candidate follows the Jerry Falwell Library (JFL) submission guidelines for publication. These guidelines must be strictly followed and can be accessed at the following webpage: [Theses and Dissertation Publishing Guidelines](#). Candidates should note that the final grade for EDCO 990 cannot be posted without the JFL confirmation email evidencing that the dissertation is accepted. This email must be forwarded to the Chair by the last day of the term in order to receive a final grade for EDCO 990. The dissertation should be submitted to the JFL no later than one week before the end of the term as it may take one to two weeks to receive the confirmation email from the JFL.

Additionally, the candidate should also ask the Chair and Reader if they would like a bound copy (Step 10 on the JFL website under the Submit and Publish Process - Step by Step section: the bindery). The candidate must select the following options if so: Front Printing Option "Title, Full Name, Year, School," Spine Printing Option "Title, Last Name, Year," Lettering Color "Gold," Cover Color "588 – Royal Blue," Cover Material "Buckram," Printing Style "Single-sided," Paper Color /Type/Size "60# White," and should not select the signature page option, as no signature page is included in the dissertation.

As a reminder, the candidate must complete all course work including completing EDCO 990 (i.e. successful completion of the final defense) requirements and paperwork necessary for graduation and should plan to attend the hooding ceremony and graduation exercises in May. Graduation information can be found on the Registrar's website. Application for graduation should be completed no later than the beginning of the term in which the candidate intends to defend the dissertation.

## Appendix A

### Dissertation Committee Qualifications and Responsibilities

#### Dissertation Chair

##### Qualifications

- Full time LU faculty member or adjunct member
- Must hold an earned doctorate degree from a regionally accredited university. This normally means a Ph.D., Psy.D., or Ed.D. in a counseling, psychology, pastoral or ministry-related field depending on the candidate's dissertation topic. Chairs who hold a degree other than an Ed.D., Psy.D., or Ph.D. in a counseling or ministry-related field can be utilized with consideration from the administrative team of the Ed.D. program.

##### Duties

The Dissertation Chair mentors the doctoral candidate through the scientific peer review process involved in dissertations in the social and behavioral sciences. Peer review is an essential component for any doctoral study that could potentially be published in a scholarly journal in these fields. Specifically, the Chair mentors the doctoral candidate in the following ways:

1. Instructs on the development of a proposal document.
  - a. Reviews drafts
  - b. Provides feedback until an acceptable document for a proposal defense is developed
2. Consults with the Reader regarding the proposal document in order to obtain feedback (peer review).
3. Prepares the candidate for the proposal defense.
4. Emails [edcodissertations@liberty.edu](mailto:edcodissertations@liberty.edu) requesting the Research Director Review (RDR)
5. Directs the dissertation committee questioning process during the proposal defense
6. Provides feedback on any needed adjustments to the candidate's study design or literature review following the proposal defense.
7. Gives feedback on ethical aspects and final approval of the candidate's IRB application.
8. Addresses any student questions or issues that arise during the student's study implementation.
9. Instructs on the development of a dissertation document
  - a. Reviews drafts
  - b. Provides feedback until an acceptable document for a dissertation defense is developed.
10. Consults with the Reader regarding the dissertation document to obtain feedback (peer review).
11. Prepares the candidate for the dissertation defense
12. Sends the dissertation announcement form to [edcodissertations@liberty.edu](mailto:edcodissertations@liberty.edu) at least five (5) business days PRIOR TO the final defense.
13. Directs the dissertation committee questioning process during the dissertation defense

14. Determines, along with the Reader (peer review), whether the candidate's work is sufficient to pass the dissertation defense.
15. Provides feedback on any needed adjustments to the candidate's interpretation of study findings.
16. Oversees the final manuscript submission process to the library
17. When appropriate, assists the student in developing an article submission to a scholarly journal.

### **Dissertation Reader**

The Dissertation Reader participates in the essential scientific peer review process for any doctoral dissertation in the social and behavioral sciences. First, peer review will be defined and then the qualifications and activities of the Dissertation Reader will be clarified.

#### **Peer Review and its Role in SBS Dissertations**

Peer review (also known as refereeing in some academic fields) involves subjecting research to the scrutiny of several experts in the discipline. It is a safeguard that can identify potential flaws in a study that the research team (in this case, the doctoral candidate and the Chair) has missed. The peer review process is regarded as critical in establishing a body of knowledge that is reliable and deemed trustworthy to the social and behavioral sciences (of which the DCCC is a part). It prevents the biases (unintentional or intentional) of the research team (the doctoral candidate and Chair) from framing the findings of a study in an inaccurate fashion. Since it is the foundation of the scientific scholarly process, having the doctoral candidate experience peer review in completing the dissertation will prepare the candidate for the conference presentation and article submission processes, which also involve peer review.

#### **Qualifications**

- Full time LU faculty member or adjunct member preferred
- Non-LU Readers require Dissertation Chair and Program Chair approval.
- Must hold an earned doctorate degree from a regionally accredited university. This normally means a Ph.D., Psy.D., or Ed.D. in a counseling, psychology, pastoral or ministry-related field depending on the candidate's dissertation topic. Chairs who holds a degree other than an Ed.D., Psy.D., or Ph.D. in a counseling or ministry-related field can be utilized with consideration from the administrative team of the Ed.D. program.

#### **Dissertation Reader Duties**

A Reader assists in the scientific peer review process involved in dissertations in the DCCC in the following ways:

1. Reviews carefully the proposal document to assess whether the doctoral candidate is ready to defend the proposal.
  - a. Provides feedback to the student and Chair regarding the proposal
  - b. Informs the Chair when there are critical issues that must be resolved before the proposal defense to prevent a potential failure



2. Participates in the proposal defense as a scientific peer reviewer
  - a. Asks questions in the proposal defense to assess the student's competency and the merits of moving forward with the study.
  - b. Provides the student and Chair feedback on any needed adjustments to the candidate's study design or literature review.
  - c. Discusses with the Chair (often privately when the candidate is asked to leave the room) any concerns about passing the doctoral candidate in the proposal defense
  - d. Officially votes whether to pass, pass with modifications, or not pass the doctoral candidate.
3. Assists the Chair (when appropriate) in addressing any student questions or issues that arise during the student's study implementation.
4. Reviews carefully the dissertation document to assess whether the doctoral candidate is ready to defend the dissertation.
  - a. Provides feedback to the student and Chair regarding the dissertation
  - b. Informs the Chair when there are critical issues that must be resolved before the dissertation defense to prevent a potential failure
5. Participates in the dissertation defense as a scientific peer reviewer
  - a. Asks questions in the dissertation defense to assess the student's accuracy and competency in analyzing the results and interpreting the findings of the study.
  - b. Provides the student and Chair feedback on any needed adjustments to the candidate's analyses or interpretation of the findings.
  - c. Discusses with the Chair (often privately when the candidate is asked to leave the room) any concerns about passing the doctoral candidate in the dissertation defense
  - d. Officially votes whether to pass, pass with modifications, or not pass the doctoral candidate.
6. When appropriate, assists the student and Chair in developing an article submission to a scholarly journal.

## Appendix B: Dissertation Defense Rubric and Decision Form

### LIBERTY UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES

---

#### DOCTORATE OF EDUCATION

#### Dissertation Defense Rubric and Decision Form

**Chair:** After the committee's decision on the dissertation defense, complete the form, submitting it to [edcodissertations@liberty.edu](mailto:edcodissertations@liberty.edu)

|      |  |
|------|--|
| Date |  |
|------|--|

|       |  |
|-------|--|
| Title |  |
|-------|--|

| Role                         | Name |
|------------------------------|------|
| Candidate                    |      |
| Chair                        |      |
| Committee Member<br>(Reader) |      |

#### Committee Decision

- Approved with minor or no further revisions  
 Provisionally approved with major revisions  
 Not approved with recommendations to revise or rewrite

**Explain decision (as applicable):**

**List revisions needed:**

**Candidate grade to be assigned for EDCO 990 (please check one and post on Canvas):**

\_\_\_\_\_P      \_\_\_\_\_NP

**(Please continue to the rubrics on the following three pages.)**

**Presentation at Dissertation Defense Rubric (Highlight the appropriate score for each category based on the candidate's presentation during the final defense)**

|                                    | <b>Advanced (3 pts)</b>  | <b>Proficient (2 pts)</b>  | <b>Developing (1 pt)</b>   |
|------------------------------------|--|--|--|
| <b>Literature Review</b>           | The presentation includes a complete representation of related research along with a complete written literature review to support and justify the research. | The presentation includes a complete representation of related research along with a complete written literature review to support and justify the research. | The presented literature review may be unclear or non-existent, and the written literature review does not fully justify the research.         |
| <b>Theoretical Framework</b>       | The presentation and the written literature review include a complete theoretical framework to fully support the research question(s).                       | The presentation and the written literature review include a theoretical framework to support the research question(s).                                      | There is a brief or non-existent mention of the theoretical framework during the presentation and/or the literature review.                    |
| <b>Methodology</b>                 | The presentation and methodology chapter is written in correct format and includes clear, understandable and justified questions, objectives and/hypotheses. | The presentation and methodology chapter includes use of proper format, and appropriate questions, objectives and/or hypotheses.                             | The presentation and methodology chapter does not include proper formatting and/or does not include clear question, objectives, or hypotheses. |
| <b>Data Collection</b>             | The candidate thoroughly and clearly articulates the design and related data collection procedures.  | The candidate clearly describes the design or the data collection procedures.  | The candidate mentions design and data collection procedures, but does neither clearly.  |
| <b>Data Analysis</b>               | The candidate clearly analyzes, evaluates, synthesizes, and interprets the research through presentation of data and findings.                               | The candidate analyzes, evaluates and interprets the research through presentation of data and findings.   | The candidate does not clearly present findings and data analysis.   |
| <b>Communication: Presentation</b> | The candidate is poised during the presentation,   | The candidate demonstrates poised  | The candidate lacks poise, and does not  |

**Presentation at Dissertation Defense Rubric (Highlight the appropriate score for each category based on the candidate's presentation during the final defense)**

|  | <b>Advanced (3 pts)</b>  | <b>Proficient (2 pts)</b>   | <b>Developing (1 pt)</b>                     |
|--|--|---|--|
|  | and clearly and fluently demonstrates effective communication in writing, while speaking, and while listening to others. | and effective communication in writing, and while speaking during the presentation. | present information clearly and effectively. |

**Written Dissertation Manuscript Rubric (Highlight the appropriate score for each category based on the quality of the final dissertation manuscript)**

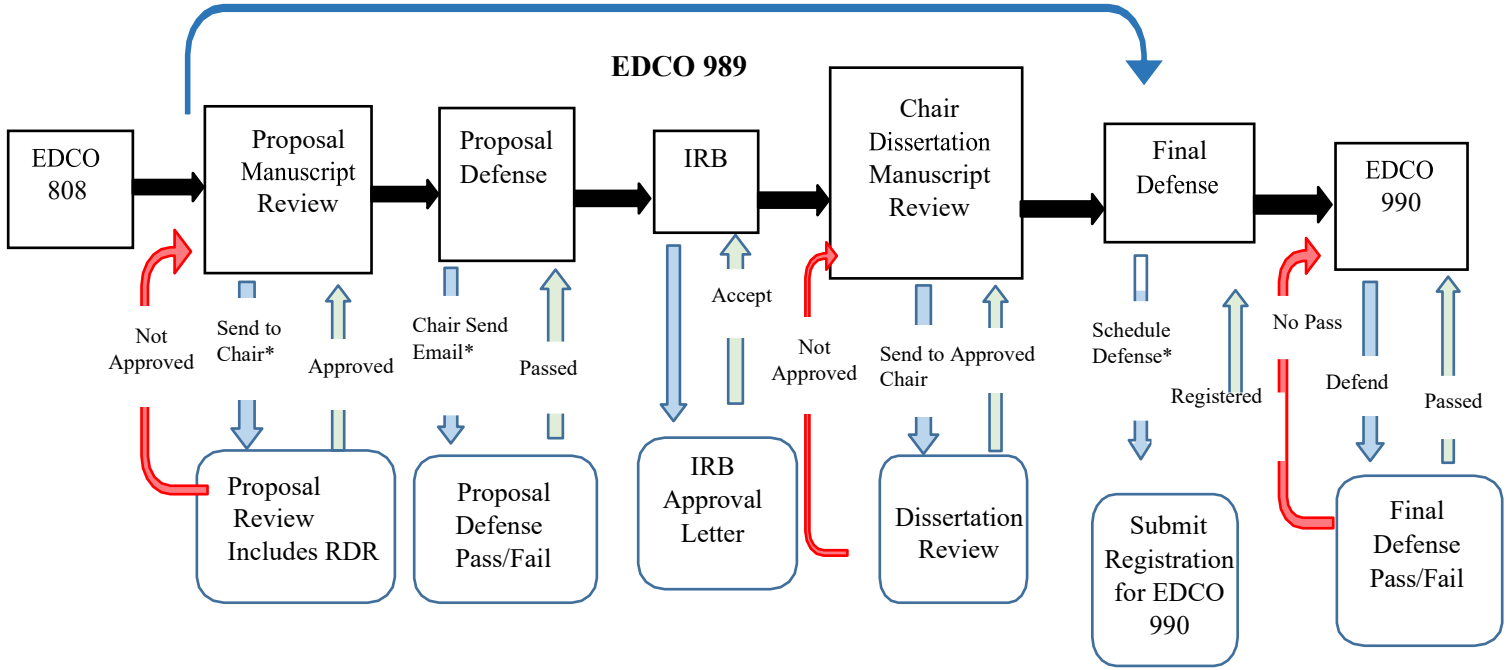
|                             | <b>Advanced (3 pts)</b>  | <b>Proficient (2 pts)</b>  | <b>Developing (1 pt)</b>  |
|-----------------------------|--|--|---|
| <b>Introduction</b>         | Candidate clearly articulates the nature of a research topic, including the relevant literature, the gap in research to be filled, the purpose, and the research design. | Candidate articulates the nature of a research topic, including the relevant literature, the purpose, and the research design. | Candidate is unable to articulate the nature of a research topic in an understandable fashion.                                |
| <b>Review of Literature</b> | The candidate includes a complete representation of related research along with a complete written literature review to support and justify the research.                | The candidate includes a representation of related research along with a written literature review to justify the research.    | The literature review may be unclear or non-existent, and the written literature review does not fully justify the research.  |
| <b>Methods/ Approach</b>    | The methodology chapter is written in correct format and includes clear, understandable and justified questions, objectives and/hypotheses.                              | The methodology chapter includes use of proper format, and appropriate questions, objectives and/or hypotheses.                | The methodology chapter does not include proper formatting and/or does not include clear question, objectives, or hypotheses. |

**Written Dissertation Manuscript Rubric (Highlight the appropriate score for each category based on the quality of the final dissertation manuscript)**

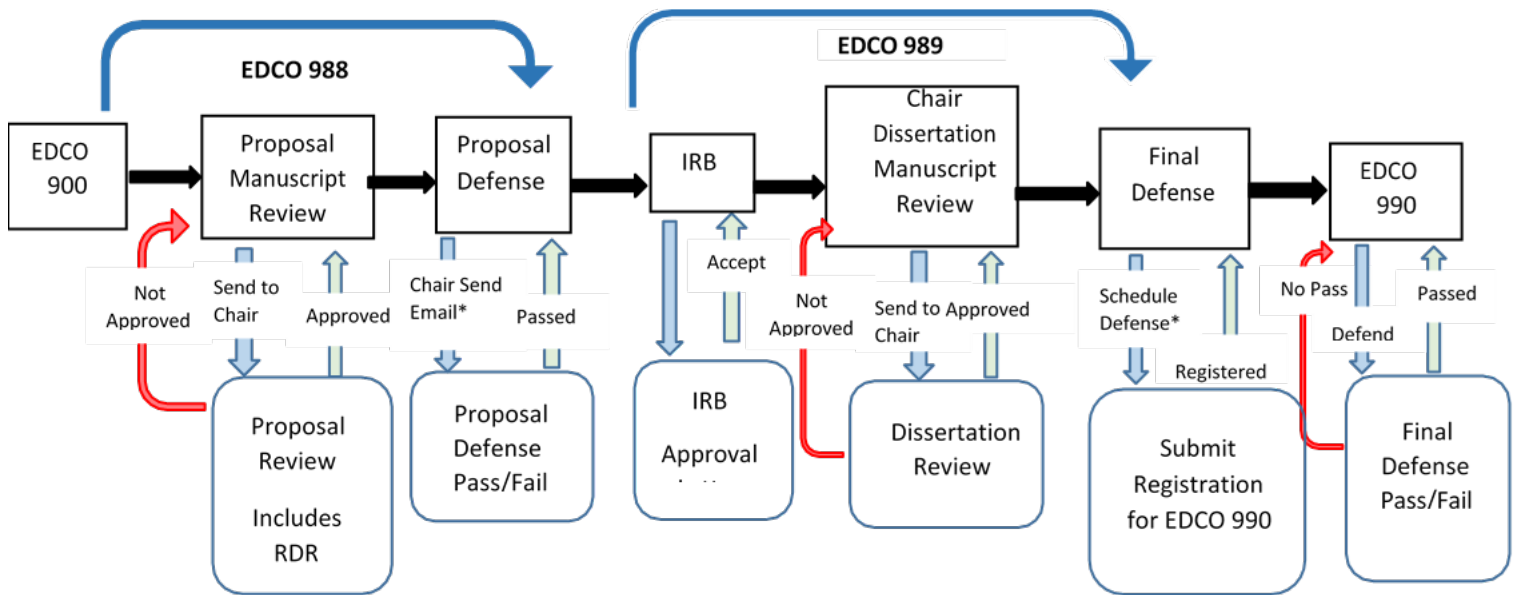
|                               | <b>Advanced (3 pts)</b>   | <b>Proficient (2 pts)</b>   | <b>Developing (1 pt)</b>  |
|-------------------------------|---|---|---|
| <b>Results/ Outcomes</b>      | The candidate clearly analyzes, evaluates, synthesizes, and interprets the research through presentation of data and findings.  | The candidate analyzes, evaluates, and interprets the research through presentation of data and findings.                           | The candidate does not clearly present findings and data analysis.  |
| <b>Discussion and Summary</b> | The candidate demonstrates complete ability to conduct and interpret a study that contributes to the literature.  | The candidate demonstrates ability to conduct and interpret a study that may contribute to the literature.                          | The candidate fails to demonstrate the ability to conduct and interpret a study. and discuss the results.           |
| <b>Writing Quality</b>        | The candidate utilizes skills in writing and other forms of communication that are consistent with professional expectations at the doctoral level, including proper use of formatting. | The candidate utilizes skills in writing and other forms of communication that are appropriate, including proper use of formatting. | The candidate does not demonstrate skills in writing and use of proper formatting for completion of a dissertation. |

### Appendix C: Dissertation Approval Process

#### Dissertation Approval Process: DCP 2018 -2019 and earlier



#### Dissertation Approval Process: DCP 2019-Present



## Appendix D: Quantitative Dissertation Template

**Note:** This appendix has been moved to the [EdD Community Care and Counseling Community](#) in Canvas.

## Appendix E: Qualitative Dissertation Template

**Note:** This appendix has been moved to the [EdD Community Care and Counseling Community](#) in Canvas.