<span style="color:red">*This document serves as a provisional dissertation handbook copy (latest update: 5/13/24).</span>

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**DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY**

# Psy.D. in Clinical Psychology
# Dissertation Manual

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# Introduction to the Dissertation Manual

## 1.1 Purpose of this Dissertation Manual

The Clinical Psychology Dissertation Manual serves as an indispensable tool to articulate the essential standards, expectations, and procedures necessary to write a clear, scholarly dissertation. This comprehensive document serves multiple important purposes: a framework for academic rigor, guidance for research design and implementation, cultivation of scholarly communication skills, quality assurance and consistency, and support for faculty mentoring.

It is incumbent upon PsyD students to familiarize themselves with the process and procedures required and outlined within the Dissertation Manual. PsyD students should thoroughly read all portions of this document before beginning the dissertation process.

## 1.2 Faith Integration

The dissertation should embrace a Christian worldview while seamlessly aligning with the ethical guidelines of the American Psychological Association (APA). The connections between psychology and theology should be explicitly examined within the context of the dissertation study. The level of discussion should be commensurate with an advanced doctoral candidate. If the research topic makes it difficult to address the intersection between psychology and theology within the main body of the dissertation, PsyD students may elect to include their Christian integration in the discussion section.

## 1.3 Checklist of the Dissertation Process

- ○ Complete Course Prerequisites as stated in PsyD Course Catalog

- ○ Register for Dissertation Credits and Begin Dissertation Process

  - o Dissertation Chair Selection

  - o Topic Approval from Chair

  - o Select Reader

- ○ Write full Dissertation Proposal (i.e., Introduction and Method sections)**--submit form.**

- ○ **Defend Final Proposal**

- ○ Institutional Review Board Submission and Grant Funding, if needed

- ○ Collect Data

- ○ Write and Complete Dissertation Manuscript (i.e., Introduction, Method, Results, & Discussion)

- ○ Schedule and Prepare for Oral Dissertation Defense—**submit form.**

- ○ **Oral Dissertation Defense**

- ○ Edit and Submit Final Manuscript to Jerry Falwell Library

## 1.4 Writing Style and APA Academic Writer

The composition of a doctoral dissertation demands a writing style that reflects the scholarly rigor, clarity, and professionalism expected at the highest academic level. Doctoral students are encouraged to embody a writing style characterized by precision, coherence, and adherence to academic conventions. As such, the dissertation is a succinct, cogent, scientific document. It requires many drafts and rewrites to achieve the quality expected of advanced doctoral candidates.

To facilitate a smooth writing process, the PsyD faculty recommend doctoral candidates compose their dissertations within APA Academic Writer. PsyD students will need to create an APA account to access the benefits of Academic Writer, which is available through **Canvas>Resources>Jerry Falwell Library>Psychology>Academic Writer.**

The following guidelines delineate the expectations for the writing style that doctoral students are required to exhibit in their dissertations:

1) **Formal and Objective Tone**: Maintain a formal and objective tone throughout the dissertation. Academic writing should be characterized by a measured and impartial voice, focusing on the presentation of evidence and logical arguments.

2) **Clarity and Conciseness**: Strive for clarity and conciseness in conveying ideas. Clearly articulate the purpose, methodology, and findings of the research, avoiding unnecessary jargon or overly complex language that may hinder comprehension. Your writing should be cogent and succinct.

3) **Precise and Appropriate Language**: Utilize precise and appropriate language to convey nuanced ideas. Choose words carefully to convey the intended meaning accurately and avoid ambiguity.

4) **Logical Structure and Organization**: Structure the dissertation with a logical flow of ideas, ensuring that each section contributes to the overall coherence of the document. Clearly delineate the introduction, literature review, methodology, results, discussion, and conclusion.

5) **Thorough Literature Review**: Conduct a thorough and critical review of the relevant literature. Synthesize existing research to provide context for the study and demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of the scholarly landscape.

6) **Methodological Clarity**: Clearly describe the research design, data collection procedures, and data analysis methods. Provide sufficient detail to enable replication and ensure the validity of the research.

7) **Effective Use of Citations**: Adhere to the citation standards designated in the APA manual. Properly cite all sources, including direct quotations, paraphrased content, and ideas borrowed from other researchers, to give due credit.

8) **Integration of Tables and Figures**: Integrate tables and figures judiciously to enhance the presentation of data. Clearly label and refer to each visual element within the text, ensuring that they are relevant and contribute to the overall understanding of the research.

9) **Proofreading and Editing**: Prioritize meticulous proofreading and editing to eliminate grammatical errors, typographical mistakes, and inconsistencies. Attention to detail is crucial to maintain the professional quality of the dissertation.

## Grammar and Writing Resources

Kaufman, L. & Straus, J. (2021). *The blue book of grammar and punctuation* (12th ed.). Jossey-Bass.

Strunk, W. (2000). *The elements of style* (4th ed.). Longman.

## Dissertation Resources

Bell, D.J., Foster, S.L., & Cone, J.D. (2020). *Dissertations and theses from start to finish: Psychology and related fields* (3rd ed.). American Psychological Association.

Harrison, E. & Rentzelas, P. (2021). *Your psychology dissertation.* Sage.

## 1.5 Plagiarism

Plagiarism, a grave breach of academic integrity, is the act of presenting someone else's work or ideas as one's own. In the context of a dissertation, plagiarism is the verbatim copying of another's words, the improper paraphrasing or appropriation of concepts, theories, ideas, or data without due credit. This unethical practice jeopardizes the academic integrity of the PsyD student, their dissertation, and Liberty University.

PsyD students are expected to meticulously attribute all sources used in their dissertation. Proper citations for quotations, ideas, theories, and paraphrased content should follow the standards espoused in the current edition of the American Psychological Association manual. Some dissertation studies require collaboration because the dissertation is part of a larger project. As such, doctoral students must acknowledge the contributions of all collaborators.

More details regarding Liberty University's policy on plagiarism can be found at https://www.liberty.edu/casas/academic-success-center/wp-content/uploads/sites/28/Plagiarism-Toolkit-Defining-Plagiarism-1.pdf

## 1.6 Dissertation Research Designs and Resources

PsyD students must complete a dissertation that is *original* in its scope under the supervision of their dissertation chair and committee. PsyD students must demonstrate an ability to use, analyze, synthesize, and interpret research literature in their dissertation. The dissertation should reflect the student's *emerging* ability to provide information relevant to the practice of clinical psychology. A commensurate level of excellence is required in the conceptualization, development, and manuscript writing of the dissertation. The final dissertation is expected to be ready for journal submission in quality, writing style, and length. The dissertation make take many forms.

- **Empirical Research Study**. Encompasses quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods designs which inform the advancement of psychological practice and/or research. Ideas include: a new scale or psychological measure, a new therapeutic intervention, a clinical or psychological experiment, replication of a

previously published research study, a quantitative analysis of the relationship between psychological constructs, and a qualitative analysis of a psychological phenomenon.

- **Evidence-Based Clinical Case Study**. An in-depth study of an individual, family, group, or event. Uses archival clinical information to develop theory, practice, and training in psychology. Could employ the creation of a new theory or intervention. Serves as a record of clinical interactions which can inform the development of research questions for later empirical studies.

- **Program Evaluation Study**. Mental health program evaluation studies help psychologists and stakeholders determine which programs and policies are effective in improving mental health outcomes for institutions and organizations. Add to basic knowledge about mental health interventions.

- **Applied Critical Evaluation of Treatment Methods**. Case conceptualization is the sine qua non of clinical psychology. As such, clinical psychologists need to understand a disorder and recognize its various clinical presentations and be able to discern the best evidence-based treatment protocol for a given diagnosis and a specific patient. Case conceptualization serves as a structure for helping clinicians use research to select an effective evidence-based treatment protocol for a given patient.

- **Research Synthesis: A Critical Analysis of the Literature**. Using a focused clinical problem, the researcher synthesizes, analyzes, and critiques both conceptually and methodologically empirical findings and theory relevant to a stated problem.

- **Other Studies**. PsyD students may propose another type of study to their dissertation chair, but the idea must be approved by the dissertation chair and program director before proceeding.

*All research designs must be approved by the dissertation chair and committee <u>before</u> beginning the dissertation proposal. No data can be collected until the dissertation proposal has been approved by the dissertation committee and the Institutional Review Board.*

## Format of Clinical Dissertations

### Empirical Research Study

Empirical Research Studies include experimental, quasi-experimental, and exploratory studies employing quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods research methods for data collection and analysis. PsyD students may work in groups of two or three in an empirical study. Group work is relegated to collecting data together or analyzing archival data within the same study. However, *each* dissertation from the same empirical study must be written *independently* and provide a *unique* contribution to the field of clinical psychology. *Empirical Research Dissertations are approximately 30 pages and ready for article submission.*

### Guidelines for Dissertation Sections

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Proposal Document** | Introduction | Introduce the research problem and purpose of the study. Clearly indicate your research questions/hypotheses. Review the literature and indicate the gap in the literature your dissertation will be filling. Focus on the literature of the past 10 years as well as seminal articles in the field. |
| | Method | Identify the research design or approach (e.g., in qualitative research this includes explaining the research paradigm). Describe how the research will be gathered and analyzed (e.g., participants, measures/instruments, and procedures). *Written in future tense.* |
| **Final Dissertation Document** | Abstract | Short summary of the entire study. Limit is approximately 250 words. |
| | Introduction | Same as above. |
| | Method | Same as above but *written in past tense.* |
| | Results | Present the findings in response to the research questions/hypotheses. Organize your data into tables and/or graphs where appropriate. |
| | Discussion | Provide a brief, summary of the study and discuss how the results answer the research questions & address the purpose of the study. State the implications and limitations of the study. Make recommendations for future research. |

**Evidence-Based Clinical Case Study**

Evidence-Based Clinical Case Studies provide rich, in-depth, contextual knowledge of a given case. The aim of clinical case studies is threefold: to apply new theories or interventions to a case, to assess the efficacy of theories/interventions for specialized populations, and to deepen practitioners' knowledge base for a given diagnosis or treatment protocol. Below are guidelines for the Clinical Case Study based upon the format developed by journals, such as Clinical Case Studies (See provided examples of clinical case study articles for formatting). *Evidence-Based Clinical Case Studies are approximately 30 pages and ready for article submission.*

## Guidelines for Dissertation Sections

| **Proposal Document** | Introduction | State the purpose of the clinical case study. Review the literature and provide a theoretical background and basis for treatment. Introduce the case and state the rationale for the specific clinical case selection. |
|---|---|---|
| | Method | Provide a description and history of the clinical case. Formulate the case conceptualization and treatment plan. *Written in future tense.* |
| **Final Dissertation Document** | Abstract | Short summary of the entire study. Limit is approximately 250 words. |
| | Introduction | Same as above. |
| | Method | Same as above but *written in past tense.* |
| | Results | Assessment of the clinical case (problems, goals, strengths, and history). Course of therapy and/or treatment outcome. Therapy monitoring and use of feedback information. |
| | Discussion | Conclusions of the process and outcome of therapy. State the treatment implications and recommendations to clinicians and students. |

**Sample Journal Article in the Dissertation Format**

Hudson, K., Fenley, A.R., Pincus, D.B., & Leyfer, O. (2023). Intensive cognitive-

behavior therapy for anxiety disorders in youth: A case study. *Clinical Case*

*Studies, 22*(2), 99-119. https://doi.org/10.1177/15346501221113523

**Program Evaluation Study**

The Program Evaluation Study is most effective when undertaken as a group project or as a part of a larger evaluation project. Guidelines are like those for the Empirical Research Study with a few additions (e.g., executive summary, recommendations to stakeholders). Possible Program Evaluation Study ideas include mental health needs assessment for a hospital, community services board, or school division or an evaluation of a current mental health prevention/intervention program for an organization. *Program Evaluation Study dissertations may be slightly longer than article length, approximately 30-40 pages.*

## Guidelines for Dissertation Sections

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Proposal Document** | Introduction | Describe the program evaluation problem. Provide the background and description of the program. Review the literature. |
| | Evaluation Question | Develop the evaluation question based on empirical literature. |
| | Method | Identify the evaluation design and provide the rationale for how the project will be conducted. Describe how the research will be gathered and analyzed (e.g., sampling, participants, instruments, and procedures). *Written in future tense.* |
| **Final Dissertation Document** | Introduction | Same as above. |
| | Method | Same as above but *written in past tense.* |
| | Results | Present the findings in response to the evaluation questions. Organize your data into tables or graphs where appropriate. |
| | Discussion | Provide a brief, summary of the study and discuss how the results answer the evaluation question(s) and purpose of the study. Address implications and limitations of the study. Provide recommendations for program stakeholders. |
| | Appendix | Executive Summary outlining the key components of the project and listing recommendations for stakeholders (1-2 pages). |

**Sample Program Evaluation**: Lynchburg Community Needs Assessment_2021-2024

**Applied Critical Evaluation of Treatment Methods Study**

The Applied Critical Evaluation of Treatment Methods Study uses a Sperry[1]-focused approach to case conceptualization: presentation, precipitant, predisposition, pattern, and perpetuants. The PsyD student will identify a disorder and its clinical presentations and critically analyze the available evidence-based treatment protocols for a given patient. The aim of this research design is for the PsyD student to select an evidence-based treatment protocol and juxtapose it to other current treatment methodologies for a specific patient. Ultimately, the PsyD student should have substantial research evidence to support their selection. *Applied Critical Evaluation of Treatment Methods Study dissertations are approximately 30 pages and ready for article submission.*

## Guidelines for Dissertation Sections

| **Proposal Document** | Introduction and Case Conceptualization | Write the problem statement. Use a Sperry-focused approach for case conceptualization of a given patient: presentation, precipitant, predisposition, pattern, and perpetuants. Based upon the patient's clinical presentation, review the extant literature of evidence-based treatment protocols. Select your treatment regimen based upon the research and explain your selection in detail. Discuss how your selected treatment protocol is different from other empirically supported treatments in terms of form, structure, and theoretical foundation. State the purpose of your study, your research question(s), and hypotheses. |
|---|---|---|
| | Method: Treatment Protocol and Assessments | Discuss how your treatment protocol is designed to address the etiologies and maintaining factors of your patient's disorder from a conceptual and practice-oriented perspective. Is your treatment protocol theory driven or manual driven? Explain. Provide a description of the structure of the treatment and description of each component of therapy. Give examples. |

| | | Discuss specific assessment measures currently used for the disorder. Compare and contrast these assessment measures to your recommended assessments. Provide the reliability and validity of the aforementioned assessments. |
|---|---|---|
| **Final Dissertation Document** | Abstract | Short summary of the entire study. Limit is approximately 250 words. |
| | Introduction | Same as above. |
| | Method | Same as above. |
| | Results: Treatment Efficacy and Effectiveness | Perform a research review of treatment efficacy and effectiveness including internal validity (with key RCTs), how does the treatment perform using various controlled conditions (e.g., wait-list control, treatment as usual, other evidence-based treatments). Compare this treatment to others using effect sizes, remission rates, RCI percentages, etc. Identify and report on any meta-analyses and summarize their findings. |
| | Discussion | Provide conclusions regarding your treatment protocol compared to other evidence-based treatments. State the treatment's implications and recommendations to clinicians and students. |

[1] Sperry, L. & Sperry, J. (2020). Case conceptualization: Mastering this competency

with ease and confidence (2nd ed.). Routledge.

**Research Synthesis: A Critical Analysis of the Literature**

A Research Synthesis is a review article that synthesizes several bodies of literature focused on a specific problem. The synthesis may include a meta-analysis, but it is not required. Examples of research synthesis articles can be found in the journal *Psychology Bulletin. The length of the dissertation is at the discretion of the Clinical Dissertation Committee; however, a suggested page length is approximately 40-50 pages (including references but not including tables or appendices).*

## Guidelines for Dissertation Sections

| **Proposal Document** | Introduction | Provides a rationale for the critical analysis of the stated clinical problem. The research synthesis must be original. |
|---|---|---|
| | Review and Analysis Plan (Procedures) | Outlines the plan for the literature review and how it will be critiqued. Inclusion and exclusion criteria must be included. *Written in future tense.* |
| **Final Dissertation Document** | Introduction | Same as above. |
| | Review and Analysis Procedures | Same as above. *Written in past tense.* |
| | Integration and Analysis of Literature | Select among possible views of the clinical problem based on the best available empirical evidence and theoretical literature. The analysis should consider limitations inherent within different types of clinical and scientific data and scholarship. |
| | Discussion | Findings from the critical analysis of the literature. Clinical and research applications need to be discussed. |

**Resources for Research Synthesis**

Comparisons of Systematic Reviews and Literature Reviews

Cooper, H. (2010). *Research synthesis and meta-analysis: A step-by-step approach*

    (4th ed.). Sage. (e-book available through the Jerry Falwell Library)

Uman, L.S. (2011). Systematic reviews and meta-analyses. *Journal of the Canadian*

    *of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, 20*(1), 57-59.

# Clinical Dissertation Process

## 2.1 Complete Prerequisite Courses

PsyD doctoral candidates must have completed 72 hours of PSYD coursework **_before_** registering for the <u>first</u> dissertation course. The prerequisite courses include the following according to cohort.

### *Cohort 1*
PSYD 600, PSYD 805, PSYD 701, PSYD 616, PSYD 700, PSYD 707, PSYD 715, PSYD 601, PSYD 605, PSYD 610, PSYD 702, PSYD 705, PSYD 796, PSYD 798, PSYD 703, PSYD 740, PSYD 810, PSYD 709, PSYD 797, PSYD 898, PSYD 704, PSYD 835, PSYD 745, PSYD 770

### *Cohort 2*
PSYD 600, PSYD 615, PSYD 700, PSYD 701, PSYD 805, PSYD 601, PSYD 605, PSYD 610, PSYD 702, PSYD 705, PSYD 707, PSYD 715, PSYD 796, PSYD 798, PSYD 703, PSYD 710, PSYD 740, PSY 810, PSYD 704, PSYD 708, PSYD 745, PSYD 709, PSYD 706, PSYD 835

### *Cohort 3*
PSYD 600, PSYD 615, PSYD 700, PSYD 701, PSYD 805, PSYD 601, PSYD 605, PSYD 610, PSYD 702, PSYD 705, PSYD 707, PSYD 708, PSYD 796, PSYD 798, PSYD 703, PSYD 710, PSYD 740, PSY 810, PSYD 704, PSYD 709, PSYD 745, PSYD 706, PSYD 835

Cohort 3 will be registered for the remaining prerequisite (PSYD 815) during the first occurrence of the dissertation class.

### *Cohort 4 and Beyond*
PSYD 600, PSYD 615, PSYD 700, PSYD 701, PSYD 805, PSYD 601, PSYD 605, PSYD 610, PSYD 702, PSYD 705, PSYD 707, PSYD 708, PSYD 796, PSYD 798, PSYD 703, PSYD 710, PSYD 740, PSY 810, PSYD 704, PSYD 709, PSYD 745, PSYD 706, PSYD 835

Cohort 4 will be registered for the remaining prerequisite (PSYD 815) during the first occurrence of the dissertation class.

**2.2 Beginning the Dissertation Process: Dissertation Course Registration, Chair Selection, and Committee Formation**

**PSYD 888 – 01**: This is the first class in the dissertation course sequence. Students meet in-person as they develop their research topic, research question(s), and literature review. Based on the research questions posed, students will develop an appropriate research design and identify the statistical methods necessary to answer their research question(s). The course will culminate with students writing a problem statement (~2-3 pages), creating a research topic matrix of their design and statistical methods (See Appendix I.), and presenting their research topic to the class (i.e., Power Point). (2 credits)

**PSYD 888 – 02**: This is the second class in the dissertation course sequence. In this semester students work independently developing their research topic further into a "mini proposal," of approximately 8-10 pages. The mini proposal will be presented to the class at the end of the course. Throughout the semester students receive continuous, individualized feedback with a theme of building their independent research. During the semester students will identify a full-time faculty member in the Liberty University PSYD department (i.e., not adjunct or emeritus) whose research expertise and interests best fit their research topic. All students will secure a dissertation chair by the end of the semester. (2 credits)

- **Dissertation Chair**— The dissertation chair must hold a doctorate degree, such as a Ph.D. or Psy.D. that reflects expertise in clinical psychology or a closely related field. The dissertation chair should be knowledgeable about the student's research topic and procedures and be willing to direct the dissertation process. A person who is unfamiliar with the research topic or the intended methodology would not be a good fit. The dissertation chair works as the primary mentor for the student providing oversight to the dissertation process from the research topic through final revisions. The chair provides feedback on the student's writing and research skills and refers the student to additional support or resources should those skills need further development. In general, all dissertation drafts and revisions are completed with the dissertation chair *prior* to submitting the manuscript to the reader. Should any

conflicts or grievances arise during the dissertation process, the dissertation chair will attempt to resolve them in a timely manner. If necessary, the dissertation chair will consult with the PSYD Program Director.

**PSYD 889**: This is the third course in the dissertation sequence and is a continuous, multiple enrollment class. In other words, students MUST enroll in this class multiple times until the proposal and dissertation are <u>completed</u> and the student is ready to defend the dissertation.  During the first occurrence of PSYD 889, a single <u>reader</u> is identified. The reader can be someone more specialized in the research topic area. The reader may come from outside the department, or they may be an adjunct professor from the department.

- **<u>Reader</u>**— The reader must hold a doctorate degree, such as a Ph.D. or Psy.D. that reflects expertise in clinical psychology, psychology, counseling, theology, or a field closely tied to the dissertation topic. Ideally, the reader should be a member of Liberty University's clinical psychology department, although they may come from outside the department with the dissertation chair and PSYD program director's approval. The reader should be knowledgeable about the student's research topic and procedures. The reader reads the completed proposal (or dissertation) and gives feedback *prior* to each defense (i.e., proposal defense and dissertation defense), attends the proposal and dissertation defense meetings, and provides their approval of the manuscript. The reader does not direct the dissertation process and is not involved in the preliminary drafts of the proposal or dissertation manuscript.

***PSYD 889 is divided into several phases.***

- **<u>Phase 1</u>**—Write the Proposal. Students write a polished, well-written proposal which involves a series of drafts. The dissertation chair will provide guidance in this endeavor. Once the dissertation chair deems the proposal is ready to be defended, the reader will provide their feedback. Phase 1 is complete when a public proposal defense is scheduled.

- **Phase 2**—Public Proposal Defense. The student will present their research proposal publicly and respond to the dissertation committee's questions. The committee will judge the merit of the research presentation and award either a "pass," "pass with changes," or a "fail." Should the student receive a pass with changes, those itemized changes must be made before proceeding. If a student receives a failure, they have <u>one month</u> to make the required changes and then present their proposal as before. Once a "pass" is awarded, the student proceeds to phase 3.

- **Phase 3**—Students submit their Institutional Review Board (IRB) application and all ancillary materials (e.g., recruitment flyer, letters of consent, surveys). No data is collected until the student receives IRB approval. This process may take several weeks. Once IRB approval is received, the student proceeds to phase 4.

- **Phase 4**—Data Collection. The student will follow the methodological procedures as outlined in the dissertation proposal. All data collection needs to be efficiently and ethically gathered in consideration of all participants' well-being. However, sometimes students may elect to used archival data such as described on the American Psychological Association's (APA) website https://www.apa.org/gradpsych/2010/03/more-data.

- **Phase 5**—Write up the results and discussion sections of the dissertation. Continue to work with the dissertation chair to ensure all sections of the dissertation are well-written and polished, which likely includes several drafts. Once the dissertation chair and reader deem the dissertation is ready for the final defense, the student registers for PSYD 890.

  *The number of credits for each iteration of PSYD 889 varies. The cumulative total number of credits which can be awarded for PSYD 889 = 6 credits.*

**PSYD 890-001**: Dissertation defense. The student will present their dissertation publicly and respond to the dissertation committee's questions. The committee will judge the merit of the research presentation and award either a "pass," "pass with changes," or a "fail." Should the student receive a pass with changes, those itemized changes must be made before proceeding. If a student receives a failure, they have <u>one month</u> to make the required changes and then present their dissertation as before. Once a "pass" is awarded, the student submits their final manuscript to the Jerry Fawell Library.

### 2.3 Writing the Proposal: Research Topic Development

One of the most difficult aspects of the dissertation process is defining the research topic. A good clinical psychology dissertation stems from a well-formulated topic which is pertinent to the field. The research topic must address a research question worth answering. In other words, the topic must have importance to the field of clinical psychology. A student might ask themselves, *does the research question extend the empirical literature in meaningful ways that impact real people, policies, and society at large?*

**Good research topics possess three characteristics**:

- **<u>Passion</u>**—Is the student passionate about the topic? *Passion* provides the drive and motivation for the student to continue pushing themselves to complete their dissertation. No matter how stellar the research topic, if the student is not passionate about it, the dissertation will likely not be completed.
- **<u>Access</u>**— The student must be given *access* to the participants (or archival data), or no data collection can occur. Without participants, no data exists, unless the student decides to use open access, archival data. Conversely, some studies, such as research synthesis do not require participants or data collection. As such, *access* is not an issue.
- **<u>Feasible</u>**— The student must be able to carry out the research study within a reasonable period. For example, longitudinal studies in which students collect data over a year or more may not be feasible or practical given the time constraints of doctoral programs and the risk of attrition.

Inspiration for a research topic may come from multiple sources, such as coursework, journal articles, professional workshops or conferences, and faculty research teams. Students must be wary of research topics that are too broad, too vague, too grand, or not measurable. *Narrowing* the research topic is quite important! APA has suggestions on their website for how to think about a dissertation research topic. https://www.apa.org/gradpsych/2005/01/starting

**Amendments to the Research Topic**:

- **Changing the Research Topic**— Should the student decide to change or modify their research topic, the amendment must be negotiated with the dissertation chair first. Once approved by the dissertation chair, the student will seek approval from the reader with an email or document describing the revised topic. If there are any objections to the change, arrangements must be made to discuss and revise the topic to meet all objections. If agreement cannot be reached between the dissertation chair, reader, and the student, then the procedures for selecting a new committee should be followed. Any deviation from these procedures should be brought to the attention of the Program Director, who then determines an appropriate course of action.

**2.4 Overall Format of the Dissertation**

- **Title page**— (See sample Title page: Appendix II)

- **Signature page**— (See sample Signature page: Appendix III)

- **Table of Contents**— (See sample Table of Contents page: Appendix IV)

- **List of Tables**— (See sample List of Tables page: Appendix V)

- **List of Figures**— (See sample List of Figures page: Appendix VI)

- **Abstract**— The abstract is a brief, comprehensive summary of the most important components of the dissertation. The abstract is limited to

approximately 4-5 sentences. A good rule of thumb is the first sentence is the problem statement. The second sentence addresses the research question. The third sentence is related to the methods and how the study was conducted. The fourth sentence communicates the most important results. The last sentence describes the implications of the findings.

- **<u>Introduction</u>**— The introduction briefly describes the research problem, reviews the relevant literature, defends the importance of the research topic, and concludes with the dissertation's research question(s) and hypotheses.

  - The **research questions** are the foundation of the dissertation. Questions must be both important to the field and answerable. Questions can be timely based on recent events (e.g., COVID 19 and its impact on mental health), related to practical problems, have significant implications for a wide audience, focus on a critical population, fill an identified gap in the literature, build on existing knowledge or theory in new or significant ways, build upon unreplicated findings, or result in new or better instrumentation, to name only a few. The student must make the case *why* a particular question is important.

- **<u>Method</u>**- The method section outlines the participants, procedures, and instruments used in the data collection and the anticipated data analysis procedures and software.

- **<u>Results</u>**— The results section presents the various qualitative and quantitative analyses through prose, tables, and figures. All the results should provide direct answers to the research question(s) posed. Results must be described and presented in ways that are consistent with the methodology chosen.

- **<u>Discussion</u>**— The discussion section interprets the statistical results in context and arrives at key conclusions regarding the research question(s) posed. It explores limitations in the research design and posits the

impact of those limitations. Moreover, the discussion section addresses the implications of the research to the wider scientific community.

- **<u>References</u>**— (See sample References page: Appendix VII)

## 2.5 Writing the Proposal: Writing and Developing the Introduction and the Literature Review

Begin the introduction with a *brief* discussion of the research problem and how it is relevant to clinical psychology and the wider scientific community. What question is the research answering? *The next part is the hard part.* Provide an overview of the *related* literature that is logical, well-thought out, and pointed. The *flow* of the literature reviews should be grouped into themes or "chunks" so that others can follow the writer's thought process. It should be evident after reviewing the literature, what the gap in the literature is. Then, explicitly state the research question(s) and hypotheses.

The literature review should be an exhaustive review of the important literature, which will take time to develop. The doctoral student must think about the flow of ideas, as it *sets the stage* for the dissertation. Although many of the student's sources should be from the last ten years, they should not ignore important, seminal works from the past.

Good reviews can be organized in a variety of ways. Some are chronological, following the thread of an idea and its development over time. Others are topical, bringing together ideas, sometimes disparate ones, in a meaningful way. Whichever method you use, you should lead the reader through a plethora of information and arrive at conclusions that are logical and supported by reliable evidence. The literature review is not merely a recitation of studies. It follows an organized, clear structure. Use subheadings to organize the flow of ideas. Make sure you synthesize and critically evaluate the relevant literature by analyzing its strengths and limitations. Use transitional phrases and paragraphs to connect ideas and sections of the literature review. Ultimately, the literature review is evaluative, coherent, and forward-looking, an integration of what is known and what remains unanswered.

## 2.6 Writing the Proposal: Developing and Writing the Methods

The choice of the research design and statistical analyses follows from the research question(s) being asked. As such, the research methods should be a natural outgrowth of the research question. The student should provide a clear description of the methodology used to answer each research question. The method section is something like a "recipe." It includes *ingredients* (i.e., the participants and instruments) and *steps and processes* (procedures and data analysis). The methods should include the following sections:

- **Participants**— Describe the population of interest and how they will be sampled. Outline the process for determining which participants to include and exclude from the study. How many participants will there be? What are the demographic characteristics that define the participants?

- **Procedures**— Delineate the process of data collection in order. For instance, how will the participants be recruited (e.g., recruitment flyer or email)? How will informed consent be achieved? Assent? How will the data be gathered? Be descriptive.

- **Instruments or Measures**— Identify all instruments or protocols used in the study. The easiest way to think about this is to determine all the psychological constructs which need to be measured (e.g., depression, anxiety, executive functioning) and then indicate for each construct how they will be operationalized in the study (e.g., depression will be defined by the individual's score on the Beck Depression Inventory). Be sure to identify every variable in the study and how they will be measured. Report the psychometric properties of all instruments.

- **Data Analysis**— How will the data be analyzed? Describe the type of analysis that will be performed for each research question. Indicate the software and version you will be using. If you are using a macro, such as Hayes PROCESS macro for mediation, moderation, and conditional process analysis, state the name of the macro and cite it appropriately.

## 2.7 The Proposal Defense

### *Preparing the Proposal Defense*

Once the dissertation chair indicates the proposal is complete and of sufficient quality, the student will prepare the proposal presentation and schedule it with the Clinical Psychology Faculty Support Coordinator. The doctoral student should allow at least two weeks for scheduling the proposal defense.

The doctoral candidate will create a PowerPoint for a 30-minute talk. The presentation should introduce the research problem, a brief review of the relevant literature, the research question(s), and hypotheses (if appropriate). Next, they will discuss their research methodology (i.e., who the participants are and what they are expected to do, procedures used for data collection, instruments which operationalize the psychological constructs, and how the data will be analyzed). Describe how the methods will answer the research question(s). It is very important that the doctoral student explicitly state how each construct is operationalized within the study. Conclude the proposal defense with a slide indicating *why* the research is important to the scientific community.

### *The Public Proposal Defense*

As mentioned previously, the doctoral candidate will present their research proposal publicly. After their presentation, the dissertation committee will ask questions. Guests and other students are silent observers; they are not permitted to ask questions. Once the dissertation committee is finished asking their questions, the doctoral candidate and all guests will be excused while the dissertation committee judges the merit of the proposal presentation.

Once the dissertation committee renders their decision, the doctoral candidate returns to the room with the committee. The committee reviews their decision with the candidate and awards the proposal one of three distinctions: "pass," "pass with changes," or a "fail." Should the student receive a pass with changes, the itemized changes must be made before proceeding. If the student receives a failure, they have <u>one month</u> to make the required changes and then

they must present their proposal again. Once a "pass" is awarded, the candidate proceeds to completing the Institutional Review Board Application. Should the candidate need funding to execute their research, they may apply for Liberty University grants (or external grants).

## 2.8 Institutional Review Board and Dissertation Grant

### *Institutional Review Board*

Liberty University has an Institutional Review Board (IRB) that must give explicit written approval for any research involving human subjects conducted under the auspices of Liberty University. Please see the Liberty University IRB website at https://www.liberty.edu/graduate/institutional-review-board/ for more information.

Students may not begin collecting data for their study without the written approval of the IRB if human subjects are involved. Dissertation chairs and other PsyD faculty members can advise students about the process for submitting research for approval to the IRB.

The IRB will want assurances that the student researcher will take every precaution to protect participants' identity, privacy, and risk of social, psychological, or physical harm. Obtaining IRB approval requires completing the IRB application and providing all necessary ancillary documents (e.g., letters of informed consent). Templates for several of the ancillary documents can be found at the Liberty University IRB website.

Should a student researcher need to make changes to the research method, the advisor must approve the changes. Depending upon the change, the student may need to resubmit the IRB application for approval.

- *Relationships with Schools and Other Agencies that Provide Data*

Sometimes student researchers have dissertation studies that involve the cooperation of outside agencies, schools, hospitals, or clinics. To gain access to these organizations' patients, clients, or students, doctoral researchers often must go through the outside organization's IRB. Acquiring cooperation

from these organizations is frequently difficult. In part, this is because these agencies or schools may not have been treated well in past research projects. Or these agencies may believe the project will require a lot of their time with no reward (or useful information) for their efforts.

For the sake of the student's dissertation research and all subsequent researchers, all personnel in a school, hospital, or other agency must be treated with respect, cordiality, and openness. Not doing so could not only compromise the student's research and access but could also make it nearly impossible for any subsequent researchers to gain access.

Should the student researcher gain approval from the outside organization, those participating in the research study must know exactly what will and will not be expected of them. They must receive all information from the study in a timely manner. Furthermore, they must be treated as *respected partners* in the dissertation research project. Both the advisor and doctoral student must be aware of and avoid all pitfalls in relationships with schools, hospitals, and other participating agencies.

### *Dissertation Grant*

Students may require funding for their dissertation research for expenses such as printing, postage, lab equipment, and assessment protocols. In these instances, students may apply for a research grant to fund some or all their expenses. Grant funding may be secured either through Liberty University or outside the university. Please visit the Liberty University Office of Sponsored Programs and Research for additional information and application forms https://www.liberty.edu/sponsored-programs/

### 2.9 Writing the Final Dissertation: Writing and Developing the Results and Discussion Sections

### *Results*

The results section of the dissertation represents the findings of the study in a clear, concise, and organized manner. The student should begin by presenting descriptive statistics that summarize the key characteristics of the sample and

variables, which can include means, standard deviations, frequencies, and percentages for quantitative data or summaries for qualitative data. The results should be structured according to the research question(s) or hypotheses. The findings for each research question or hypothesis should be presented to maintain clarity and coherence. Do *not* report every detailed finding, but only the most important ones. All other results should be found within the tables. Figures should be used to visually present the findings, especially if the data is complex or has multiple variables. Tables and figures should be clearly labeled. Inferential statistics should be reported such as ANOVAs, regression analyses, goodness of fit tests, p-values, and effect sizes. The findings should be interpreted with respect to the research question(s) or hypotheses. To enhance the clarity of the findings, the candidate should include clear subheadings to guide the reader through the results for each research question or hypothesis.

### *Discussion*

The dissertation's discussion section interprets the results of the study, draws key conclusions, discusses the implications of the research and contextualizes them within the broader literature, and discusses the limitations of the study.

Begin by restating the research questions or hypotheses addressed in the study. This provides a clear reference point to the reader and helps maintain focus throughout the discussion. Present a concise summary and interpretation of the key findings of the study that address each research question or hypothesis. Avoid repeating all findings given in the results section, but instead focus on the most important and relevant ones. Discuss the implications of the results for theory, practice, and future research in clinical psychology. Describe how the findings contribute to or challenge existing research. Acknowledge and discuss the limitations of the study. Limitations can be methodological, such as sampling techniques, sample size, or measurement issues.

## 2.10 Preparing the Dissertation Oral Defense and Final Manuscript Submission

### *Preparing the Oral Dissertation Defense*

Once the dissertation chair indicates the final dissertation is complete and of sufficient quality, the candidate will need to prepare the oral dissertation defense presentation and schedule it with the Clinical Psychology Faculty Support Coordinator. The student should allow at least two weeks for scheduling the oral defense.

For the final dissertation presentation, the student will create a PowerPoint for a 45-minute talk. The presentation should briefly introduce the research problem, the literature review, and the research question(s), and hypotheses (if appropriate). Next, the candidate will have a slide that indicates *why* the research is important to the scientific community. This portion of the presentation should not exceed a third of the slides.

The second third of the presentation should focus on the findings and interpretations of the research. Tables and figures should be included to illustrate the results. The final third of the presentation should address the key conclusions tied to the research question(s) and hypotheses. Attention should be given to the implications of the research to the scientific community and limitations of the study. The final slides should address further areas of study and a slide titled, "questions?"

### *Oral Dissertation Defense*

The student will present their dissertation publicly and respond to the dissertation committee's questions. The committee will judge the merit of the research presentation and award either a "pass," "pass with changes," or a "fail." Should the student receive a pass with changes, those itemized changes must be made before proceeding. If a student receives a failure, they have <u>one month</u> to make the required changes and then present their dissertation again. Once a "pass" is awarded, the student submits their final manuscript to the

Jerry Fawell Library. To submit the dissertation for publication, please go to the Jerry Falwell Library website at https://www.liberty.edu/library/etd/

- Students will receive an initial email confirming that the library received the submission. Next, the library will review the submission to ensure that it is complete and send a second email to the student with either an approval or required revisions within 10 business days of the initial submission.

    o If revisions are required, the JFL review will take up to an additional 10 business days to respond with either an acceptance or a requirement for additional revisions.

    o When students receive the email notifying them that their work has been accepted, they should forward it to their committee chair.

- Students should allow at least 30 days after acceptance for their work to be published in Scholar's Crossing.

Per the Graduate School, all the following steps must be completed **before** a student receives a final grade in PSYD 890.

1) Student defends the dissertation.
2) Student completes all edits that the dissertation committee requests.
3) Chair provides final approval.
4) The student verifies that the dissertation meets the requirements stated in the Jerry Falwell Library (JFL) checklist (See below.).
5) Student uploads the dissertation to the JFL portal (See website instructions for more detail).
6) Once the JFL confirms receipt of the dissertation through email, the student emails the Chair.
7) Chair posts the grade in Canvas for PSYD 890 and emails the PSYD Program Director with the following information: Student name and LU ID, Chair name and LU ID, and Reader name and LU ID.

# Jerry Falwell Library

# Electronic Theses, Dissertations, and Scholarly Projects (ETD)

# Submission Checklist

This checklist is designed to guide you through the ETD submission process. Simply check off each item as you complete it. You do not need to submit the checklist. (*You may also find this brief video tutorial helpful as you prepare to submit your electronic thesis, dissertation, or scholarly project to Scholars Crossing, the Liberty University institutional repository.*)

☐ I have done **one** of the following for all copyrighted materials included in my work (e.g., *photographs, illustrations, charts, graphs, testing instruments, etc.*): (*Check one*)

   ☐ I included an appendix that provides documentation that I received permission to use **and** to publish the copyrighted materials.

   ☐ I removed or blocked out copyrighted material for which I do not have permission to publish and replaced it with the statement "*Removed to comply with copyright*" along with either a permalink or a citation for the removed material.

☐ I have carefully checked and confirm **all** of the following: (*Check all*)

   ☐ The table of contents, list of figures, and/or list of tables are correct and consistent throughout my ETD.

   ☐ There are no grammar or spelling errors.

   ☐ The formatting is consistent and adheres to my program requirements.

☐ I have successfully defended my ETD and made all final revisions, if any, required by my committee.

☐ I have saved and will submit a scanned copy of the signed signature page or other documentation of committee approval (e.g., congratulatory email) **as a separate file**. (*This file will not be published.*)

☐ In order to protect privacy, I have removed or blocked out all signatures and contact information in my final document that will be published, including email addresses, phone numbers, and street addresses.

☐ I have saved the final version of my ETD as a PDF.

☐ I have submitted the PDF version of my ETD via https://www.liberty.edu/ETDsubmission. (Once submitted, please allow up to **10 days** for review**.**)

We congratulate you on reaching this milestone! We are here to help you through the ETD submission process. Please feel free to reach out to us at scholarlycommunications@liberty.edu with any questions.

**2.11 Style and Typing of the Dissertation: Fonts, Margins, and Pagination**

These guidelines are based on the current APA Manual (7th ed.). The purpose of these guidelines is to give a ***brief*** description of the formatting requirement; however, the APA manual provides greater detail. If the candidate has a question regarding the formatting of the dissertation, they should consult the current APA manual.

<u>**Fonts**</u>

A standard font of 12 point is acceptable for most fonts. (See the APA manual for a complete list.). Whichever font and size are selected, the requirement is that it is "good, clear copy." The same font should be employed throughout the manuscript except for tables and figures.

Recommendations for fonts included below are in the size and font recommended for the dissertation.

| Serif | Sans Serif |
|---|---|
| o  12-point Times New Roman<br>o  12-point Georgia<br>o  12-point Bookman Old Style | o  12-point Arial<br>o  12-point Calibri |

<u>**Margins and Spacing**</u>

The dissertation must have the following uniform margins. These margins apply to all charts, tables, graphs, and figures. It may be necessary to reduce the size of graphs, tables, charts, etc. to meet this requirement.

o  <u>Digital Dissertation</u>: 1-inch margins on all sides of the page. This is the default page margin in most word-processing programs.

o  <u>Hard-Bound Dissertation</u>: 1-inch margins on all sides except the LEFT side of each page, the margin must be 1.5-inches to allow for binding.

The text of the dissertation must be double-spaced. All footnotes and endnotes should be single-spaced. Extended direct quotations (more than 40 words)

should be single-spaced and indented (a minimum of five spaces) for each entry, with proper citations.

## **Paragraphs Indentation and Alignment**

Align the text to the left and leave the right margin "ragged." Do not use full justification, which adjusts the spacing between words to make all lines the same length. Do not manually divide words at the end of the line, and do not use the hyphenation function to break words at the ends of lines.

Indent the first line of every paragraph 0.5 inches. For consistency, use the TAB key. The remaining lines of the paragraph should be left-aligned.

## **Pagination**

Preliminary pages should be numbered with lower-case Roman numerals (i, ii, iii, etc.) at the bottom and center of each page, 1" from the bottom edge. The title page, copyright page, and signature page should be counted when numbering successive pages, but the number should not appear on that page. The first page to receive lower-case Roman numeral "iv" would be the dedication page if you had a copyrighted page. See below for a complete list of how each page should be numbered. Begin numbering the text with Arabic numerals (1, 2, 3, etc.) at the start of the first page of text, 1" from the top right of the page.

| | |
|---|---|
| Title page | Number assigned but NOT typed. |
| Copyright page | Number assigned but NOT typed. |
| Abstract | Number NOT assigned or typed. |
| Signature page | Number assigned but NOT typed. |
| Dedication page | Roman numeral, numbered consecutively beginning with "iv." |
| Acknowledgements | Small Roman numeral, numbered consecutively. |
| Table of Contents | Small Roman numeral, numbered consecutively. |
| List of Tables | Small Roman numeral, numbered consecutively. |
| List of Figures | Small Roman numeral, numbered consecutively. |
| Text | Arabic numeral, numbered consecutively beginning with "1." |
| Body of Dissertation | Arabic numeral, numbered consecutively. |
| References | Arabic numeral, numbered consecutively. |
| Appendices | Arabic numeral, numbered consecutively. |

**Appendix I: Research Topic Matrix**

Research Topic Matrix

| | |
|---|---|
| Research Problem | |
| Research Question(s) | |
| Gap in the Literature Review | |
| Hypotheses | |
| Define the variables | |
| Methods: Participants | |
| Methods: Procedures | |
| Methods: Measures/Instruments | |
| Methods: Data Analysis | |

*Click **HERE** for a fillable form.

**Appendix II: Title Page Example**

The dissertation must be prepared with 1" margins on all sides.

The title must be double spaced.

Title of Dissertation

All text on the title page should be double spaced.

A Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of the School of Behavioral Sciences

Liberty University

In Partial Fulfilment

of the Requirements for the Degree,

Doctor of Psychology in Clinical Psychology

By

Name, degrees

Month and Year of Degree Conferred

**Appendix III: Copyright Page**

**Appendix IV: Signature Page Example**

Clinical Psychology

School of Behavioral Sciences

Liberty University

Lynchburg, Virginia

**APPROVAL OF THE DISSERTATION**

This dissertation, ("title"), has been approved by the Graduate Faculty of the School of Behavioral Sciences, Clinical Psychology program in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Clinical Psychology (Psy.D.) Degree Program.

_____
Name of Doctoral Chair
(insert name)

_____
Name of Reader
(insert name)
                                                            _____
                                                            Date

**Appendix V: Table of Contents Example**

Table of Contents

## Appendix VI: List of Tables Example

List of Tables

## Appendix VII: List of Figures Example

List of Figures

## Appendix VIII: References Example

## References

Allison, L., Bryant, L., & Hourigan, M. (Eds.). (1997). *Grading in the post-process classroom: From theory to practice.* Boynton/Cook.

American Psychological Association. (1992). Ethical principles of psychologists and code of conduct. *American Psychologist, 47,* 1597-1611.

American Psychological Association, American Educational Research Association, and National Council on Measurement in Education. (1995). *Standards for educational and psychological testing.* American Psychological Association.

**Appendix IX: IRB Checklist**

# LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.
## INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

### IRB APPLICATION CHECKLIST

*Use the checklist below to make sure you have submitted the necessary documents to the IRB:*

☐ **I have completed the necessary CITI Training.** *(You may submit your application prior to completing CITI Training; however, the IRB will not be able to approve your research until CITI Training is completed).*

- **Please note:** *You do not need to send the IRB your CITI completion certificate. The IRB receives reports automatically and verifies CITI training during the review process.*

☐ **I have created the supplemental documents (templates) listed below that are needed for my study and attached them to my Cayuse IRB application as separate Word documents\*:**

☐ Permission Request Letter(s)

☐ Recruitment Materials:
- Letter(s)
- Announcement(s)
- Social Media Post(s)
- Email(s)
- Flyer(s)
- Verbal/Phone Script(s)
- Follow-Up(s)

☐ Consent Materials:
- Consent Form(s)
- Child Assent Form(s)
- Parental Consent Form(s)
- Debriefing Form(s)

☐ Instruments:
- Survey Questions
- Questionnaire Questions
- Interview Questions
- Focus Group Questions
- Other Test/Assessment Material

☐ *If applicable,* I have attached documentation of permission or IRB approval from my study site(s) (as a letter, or email response) to my Cayuse IRB application. See the **FAQs page** for information on when documentation of permission or IRB approval is needed.

☐ I have submitted my application and the above supplemental documents to the IRB through Cayuse IRB.

*\*Documentation of permission and proprietary instruments may be submitted as PDFs.*

If you are unable to access Cayuse IRB, please contact the IRB, irb@liberty.edu.

# Proposal and Final Dissertation Rubric

|  | Acceptable | Minor Revisions | Major Revisions |
|---|---|---|---|
| **1. Abstract** | | | |
| A. Identification of the **specific research problem(s)** that the study is addressing. | | | |
| B. The **purpose** of the study and the importance of the work within the larger theoretical framework are clearly delineated. | | | |
| C. The **purpose** of the study is plainly tied to the research problem. | | | |
| D. The **methodology** was clearly presented, and it reflects the study's research question(s). | | | |
| E. Overall, the most important **results** are presented. | | | |
| F. The **implications** of the research findings and how the study's findings fit within the larger theoretical framework are delineated. | | | |
| Comments: | | | |
| **2. Introduction: Theoretical Framework** | | | |
| A. A clear statement of the **research problem** is presented, with important relevant concepts defined. | | | |
| B. A distinct, well-defined link is established between the **existing literature** and what needs to be known. | | | |
| C. The importance of the general topic and specific **research question(s**) posed is made clear. | | | |
| Comments: | | | |
|  | Acceptable | Minor Revisions | Major Revisions |
| **3. Introduction—Research Questions** | | | |
| A. The research question(s) are clear and **answerable**. | | | |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| B. The research question(s) posed can be **feasibly** addressed in the context of a dissertation. | | | |
| C. Posing and addressing the research question(s) can be done in an **ethical** manner. | | | |
| Comments: | | | |

| **4. Methodology** | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| A. The research design is described in detail, with particular attention to all variables to be addressed. | | | |
| B. The sample and/or sampling plan are described and are appropriate. | | | |
| C. Data collection procedures are described in sufficient detail and are appropriate to the research question(s) posed. | | | |
| D. Data collection tools (e.g., instruments or observation protocols) are described in detail and are appropriate. | | | |
| E. Data analysis plans are appropriate and are described in details, with particular reference to the research question(s) posed. | | | |
| Comments: | | | |

| | Acceptable | Minor Revisions | Major Revisions |
|---|---|---|---|
| **5. Results** | | | |
| A. **Results** are presented clearly and concisely. | | | |
| B. The **results** answer the research question(s) posed. | | | |
| C. **Tables** are used appropriately to summarize important findings. | | | |
| D. **Figures** are used properly to visually represent the results. | | | |
| Comments: | | | |

# Proposal and Final Dissertation Rubric

| 6. Discussion—Conclusions and Implications | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| A. Results or findings are **summarized** clearly with direct reference to the **research questions** posed. | | | |
| B. The **results** or findings are placed in the appropriate **context** within the broader area of the study. | | | |
| C. The **implications** of the findings for practice and future research are discussed in detail. | | | |
| D. The **limitations** of the study are acknowledged and discussed in the context of interpreting the findings (e.g., generalizability, transferability) | | | |
| Comments: | | | |

| 7. Writing | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| A. The proposal or dissertation is written in a scholarly manner that is consistent with the research literature in the student's field of study. | | | |
| B. The dissertation is free of grammatical, spelling, and typographical errors. | | | |
| C. The dissertation follows the structure and organization consistent with the Liberty University Dissertation handbook and APA guidelines. Proper attribution is given when the work of others is used or cited. | | | |
| Comments: | | | |