

# LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

## SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

DOCTORAL PROGRAMS  
DISSERTATION HANDBOOK  
2019

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

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## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1 Introduction to the Doctoral Program and the Dissertation Process**

The doctoral programs in the School of Education (SOE) consist of two primary components: the coursework and the dissertation. The student completes coursework to develop and hone critical thinking skills, writing skills, and knowledge. The purpose of the coursework is to prepare the student to become a doctoral candidate. The doctoral dissertation is the final academic requirement for the doctoral program and is designed to evaluate the candidate's capabilities as a scholar. It is often more difficult and can often take longer to complete than the coursework.

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

The purpose of this handbook is to provide information about the dissertation process and related policies. 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 and the committee are outlined. Because the completed dissertation is a publication of Liberty University (LU) and represents the university, the SOE, and the author, candidates are expected to maintain high standards concerning the content and appearance of their dissertations.

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

There are several academic policies that pertain specifically to the doctoral programs in the SOE. 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 Time Limit for Completion of the Degree

The maximum time limit for completion of the doctoral program is seven years. Any student who does not complete coursework within the permissible time limit for any reason, including discontinued enrollment, must reapply for admission. If the student wishes to continue in the program at a later date, he or she will need to reapply and, if accepted, will be subject to all requirements for the DCP for the current academic year. A student may reapply to the program only once, and the Administrative Chair of Doctoral Programs and Research will determine how many additional semesters will be granted. Students who wish to appeal for extra time in the program should submit a formal appeal via the [SOE Policy Appeals Form](#).

**Exception:** For students admitted with 18 or more hours of credit from an Educational Specialist (Ed.S.) program or transferring from another doctoral program, the time limit for completion of the doctoral program is five years.

## 2.2 Number of NP Grades

Students are only allowed one No Pass (NP) grade as part of the doctoral program. Two NPs in any one course will result in removal from the program. This policy applies specifically to EDUC 970, 980, 988, 989, and 990.

## 2.3 Limit for Times Registered for EDUC 988 and EDUC 989

Candidates are only allowed to register for EDUC 988 three times before successful completion of an approved proposal. In addition, candidates have a limit of six times registering for EDUC 989. Exceeding either of the limits will 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 via the [SOE Policy Appeals Form](#) in order to request an extension. Each student must include a full justification of the request and, if applicable, documentation evidencing his or her

chair's support of the extension. If the appeal for an extension is approved, the Administrative Chair of Doctoral Programs and Research, in consultation with the Directors of Qualitative, Quantitative, or Applied Doctoral Research, 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.

#### **2.4 Continuous Enrollment Policy**

After completion of EDUC 980, students must be continually enrolled in the program until completion of EDUC 990 (Dissertation Defense). Continuous enrollment means that the student must be enrolled in at least one course that will count toward completion of the doctoral program per semester (including summer). Failure to maintain continuous enrollment will result in removal from the program. 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.

**Note:** Students returning to the program after breaking enrollment for more than one year may be required to complete additional coursework or retake courses at the discretion of Administrative Chair of Doctoral Programs and Research in consultation with the Directors of Quantitative, Qualitative, or Applied Doctoral Research.

#### **2.5 SOE Doctoral Community**

The SOE Doctoral Community is a Blackboard site that houses important information about the dissertation process. While this handbook provides a general guide for the dissertation process, the SOE Doctoral Community provides more detailed step-by-step information for each

milestone in the dissertation process. Candidates will be given access to the SOE Doctoral Community upon enrollment in EDUC 915, 917, or 919. To access the community,

- access Blackboard as you normally would,
- look to the left hand side of the page under “Non-term Courses,”
- click the link for “SOE\_Doctoral\_Community\_01.”

### 3. The Dissertation Committee

The standard dissertation committee for the doctoral program consists of two members: (a) a dissertation chair and (b) a committee member. One of the two, either the chair or committee member, must be an approved methodologist (see note below). Upon entry in the program, students should begin thinking about identifying a potential dissertation chair. At the latest, each candidate should officially secure a dissertation chair by the conclusion of EDUC 980. Then, under the direction of the chair, the candidate should secure his or her committee member. A candidate’s dissertation committee must include the following:

1. **Committee Chair:** A *committee chair* must hold an earned doctoral degree (Ed.D. or Ph.D.) in an education-related field and be employed by LU (residential or online). See Appendix A for more information about chair qualifications and responsibilities. See the SOE Doctoral Community in Blackboard for the approved Chair/Committee Member search list.
2. **Committee Member:** A *committee member* must hold an earned doctoral degree (Ed.D. or Ph.D.) in an education-related field and be employed by LU (residential or online). See Appendix A for more information about committee member qualifications and responsibilities. See the SOE Doctoral Community in Blackboard for the approved Chair/Committee Member search list.

**Note:** One member of the committee, either the chair or committee member, **MUST** be a Liberty SOE certified research methodologist. Liberty SOE certified research methodologists are trained researchers in quantitative, qualitative, and/or applied research. They have demonstrated an established record of research, evidenced by their professional contributions to the field of education through peer-reviewed publications and conference presentations. They have experience in chairing and sitting as a committee member on numerous dissertation committees. Before being invited to serve as a Liberty SOE certified research methodologist, the methodologist's coursework, dissertation, publications, presentations, and teaching ability are considered. The methodologist is required to sit through an interview by a team of Liberty SOE research faculty before certification is granted. See the SOE Doctoral Community in Blackboard for the certified methodologist search list.

### **3.1 Chair and Committee Selection (Committee Member Form)**

While enrolled in EDUC 915, 917, or 919, candidates will be given access to the SOE Doctoral Community in Blackboard. This Blackboard community contains a section called Committee Search, which houses information about SOE approved chairs and committee members. In EDUC 980, candidates will be directed to access that section of the SOE Doctoral Community to select a prospective chair and committee member. Either the chair or the committee member must be a Liberty SOE certified research methodologist.

Candidates should first reach out to prospective chairs one at a time. A mass email must never be sent to multiple faculty members. When contacting potential chairs and committee members, the candidate needs to organize and provide a complete methods chapter for a dissertation or a complete prospectus. Candidates who need assistance selecting a prospective chair can email [EDUCDissertation@liberty.edu](mailto:EDUCDissertation@liberty.edu) with an attached dissertation prospectus or

methods chapter, as well as the names of any chairs already contacted, and the Doctoral Support Team will assist them in the committee search process.

If a chair indicates he or she is willing to serve on the committee, then the prospective chair and the candidate can discuss inviting the committee member. When the chair and candidate identify a willing committee member, the candidate will complete the [Committee Member Form](#), located in the SOE Doctoral Community.

All committee requests must be approved by the Doctoral Support Team. The Committee Member Form will be reviewed and candidates will be notified whether or not their chair and committee member selections are approved. Please see the SOE Doctoral Community for an outline of the specific steps in the chair and committee member selection process.

**Note:** Once a chair and committee member are approved, changes to the committee will only be considered when there are extenuating circumstances. Under these circumstances, the candidate should contact the Doctoral Support Team at [EDUCDissertation@liberty.edu](mailto:EDUCDissertation@liberty.edu) to seek approval for a change in committee. The Doctoral Support Team is available to assist you with any questions or concerns during the dissertation process, and candidates should contact [EDUCDissertation@liberty.edu](mailto:EDUCDissertation@liberty.edu) immediately if they encounter any issues, such as concerns with committee members.

## 4. Dissertation Guidelines

### 4.1 Dissertation Research Topics

Students should start considering dissertation topics upon entry to the program. When opportunities exist, students should research the topic of interest in the form of literature reviews and related papers for doctoral coursework. **It is important to note that a research topic is not the same as a research study.** A topic is general in nature, whereas a 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. It is wise to avoid topics that are overly ambiguous, challenging, and esoteric. Further, it is never ethical to conduct research where the researcher has any type of authority over the participants (e.g., teacher, professor, or administrator) if the data cannot be collected anonymously. Ideally, the research topic should be within the expertise and research interests of the potential dissertation chair. To become familiar with the SOE faculty and their research interests, candidates are encouraged to dialogue with faculty throughout their coursework, as well as look through the Chair/Committee Member search list in the SOE Doctoral Community in Blackboard while enrolled in EDUC 980.

Faith integration within the dissertation is acceptable where appropriate. If a faith perspective is included, it should be well-integrated throughout the manuscript (not included as an afterthought or simply tacked on).

#### **4.2 Dissertation Research Designs**

Dissertations may consist of various research designs; however, all research studies for the purpose of a doctoral dissertation should include a rigorous production of scholarly knowledge. Ph.D. candidates will choose either a quantitative or qualitative method, while Ed.D. candidates may choose an applied method (see note below for further explanation). Candidates may choose from among the following designs:

- For quantitative studies, standard research designs that a candidate may choose include true experiments (rarely done in education), quasi-experiments, causal-comparative designs, and correlational studies;

- for qualitative research, a candidate may choose to utilize phenomenological, grounded theory, case study, historical, and ethnographic designs; and
- for applied research (Ed.D. candidates only), a candidate may choose to utilize a multiple method research design.

If a candidate wishes to use an alternate design, he or she will need to provide a rationale and seek approval from the Directors of Quantitative, Qualitative, or Applied Doctoral Research.

**Note:** Ed.D. candidates on degree completion plans (DCPs) for the 2019-20 and future academic years may only choose an applied study for the dissertation. Ed.D. candidates who are on DCPs for the 2018-19 and earlier academic years have the option to conduct quantitative, qualitative, or applied studies, based on the coursework completed. If an Ed.D. student successfully completes EDUC 817 and EDUC 919 (Professional Writing & Research, qualitative section) or EDUC 817 and EDUC 917 (Qualitative Analysis), then he or she may do a qualitative dissertation. If an Ed.D. student successfully completes EDUC 812, EDUC 815, and EDUC 919 (Professional Writing & Research, quantitative section) or EDUC 812, EDUC 815, and EDUC 915 (Quantitative Analysis), then he or she may do a quantitative dissertation. If an Ed.D. student successfully completes EDUC 816 and EDUC 919 (Professional Writing & Research, applied section) or EDUC 812, EDUC 815, EDUC 817, and EDUC 919 (Professional Writing & Research, applied section), then he or she may do an applied dissertation.

### **4.3 Recommended Textbooks**

It is highly recommended that candidates retain their textbooks from their previous research and methods courses. These include:

#### **Quantitative Textbooks.**

Warner, R. (2013). *Applied statistics: From bivariate through multivariate techniques* (2nd ed.).

Revised 1/11/2019

Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Gall, M. D., Gall, J. P., & Borg, W. R. (2007). *Educational research: An introduction* (8th Ed.).

Boston: Pearson.

Green, S. B., & Salkind N. J. (2013). *Using SPSS for Windows and Macintosh: Analyzing and*

*Understanding Data* (7th ed.). Boston: Pearson.

### **Qualitative Textbooks.**

Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches*

(3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications.

Patton, M. (2002). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA:

Sage Publications.

Schwandt, T. (2007). *The Sage dictionary of qualitative inquiry* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA:

Sage Publications.

### **Applied Research Textbook.**

Bickman, L., & Rog, D. (Eds.). (2009). *The Sage handbook of applied social research* (2nd ed.).

Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

## **4.4 Academic Honesty**

Honesty and integrity are highly valued at LU and in the SOE. The same principles and expectations of academic honesty and integrity in coursework are true for the dissertation. The [Liberty University Code of Honor](#) 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, the committee, and the SOE administration decide the final consequences of academic dishonesty.

The dissertation needs to be an original work of the candidate, and the reuse of previous research (e.g., master's theses, publications) is not acceptable. All previous work needs to be cited according to current American Psychological Association (APA) guidelines, and the APA manual's section on self-plagiarism should be reviewed. Properly crediting another individual's work is also an ethical imperative.

### **5. The Prospectus**

In EDUC 980, the candidate develops a complete research prospectus. The Quantitative, Qualitative, or Applied Dissertation Template (located in the SOE Doctoral Community in Blackboard) is used to develop the prospectus. The prospectus, comprised of Chapters One, Two, and Three of the dissertation, is the first formal document candidates write as part of the dissertation process. The prospectus is expected to be foundational to the formal proposal and then ultimately to the dissertation manuscript. All other elements of the first three chapters of a dissertation are present. The prospectus is typically from 30 to 50 pages long, with a literature review (Chapter Two) of at least 15 pages.

The primary assignment in EDUC 980 is the prospectus. To earn a pass on this assignment, the candidate is expected to incorporate all feedback from previous dissertation courses leading up to EDUC 980. When submitting the manuscript for review, candidates must use correct APA formatting and grammar and ensure the research design and analysis sections include scholarly research text references. It is highly recommended that EDUC 980 be taken when the candidate has sufficient time to devote to developing a solid prospectus. Failure to do so could result in not passing EDUC 980, and this course may only be taken twice.

Upon entrance into EDUC 988, all feedback from the EDUC 980 course should be discussed with the chair and committee member. Failure to implement the feedback,

especially in regard to research design and analysis, will result in significant delays in the dissertation process.

## **6. Proposal**

### **6.1 Develop the Proposal**

After successful completion of EDUC 980, the candidate enrolls in the first three hours of EDUC 988 in his or her chair's section. If the candidate does not have a chair at this point, the candidate should enroll in EDUC 988 section A00 and refer to Section 3.1 of this handbook for information about securing a dissertation chair. Upon enrollment in EDUC 988, the candidate is provided access to the EDUC 988 Blackboard course that is facilitated by the chair. Although EDUC 988 is not a typical course, as the primary objective is to fully develop the dissertation proposal, there are weekly progress quizzes, monthly Discussion Board updates, and manuscript submissions. EDUC 988 is an A term course (full semester) and candidates must enroll continuously.

Upon enrollment in EDUC 988, the candidate immediately begins working with his or her committee to develop a solid dissertation proposal. The proposal needs to consist, 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). Although the proposal is normally lengthened as it is transformed into the first three chapters of the full dissertation, it may not change drastically once it is completed and approved as part of EDUC 988. A change in topic and/or design may warrant the need for a candidate to complete additional coursework or retake courses at the discretion of either the

Director of Quantitative, Qualitative, or Applied Doctoral Research.

## **6.2 Proposal Review: Milestone One**

The chair always reviews the proposal manuscript first. When the chair is satisfied with the proposal and has given approval, the chair disseminates the proposal manuscript to the committee member for feedback. Committee member reviews can take up to two weeks. Whichever member of the committee is serving as the methodologist will provide feedback on the manuscript, with a specific focus on the proposed research methods. Once the committee is satisfied with the proposal, the chair will send it to

[SOEDissertationRev@liberty.edu](mailto:SOEDissertationRev@liberty.edu) for a review by either the Director of Quantitative, Qualitative, or Applied Doctoral Research. A director review can take up to two weeks. *No proposal defense can take place without approval from either the Director of Quantitative, Qualitative, or Applied Doctoral Research.*

The candidate should expect that the proposal manuscript will go through multiple revisions before a proposal is approved for a proposal defense. Candidates should contact the Dissertation Coordinator if two weeks is exceeded or the committee chair becomes unresponsive. The committee chair should contact the Dissertation Coordinator if the committee member is not responsive. Once the chair and the committee member decide the candidate is ready for a proposal defense and the proposal has passed the director review, the candidate may move forward with scheduling a proposal defense.

## **6.3 The Proposal Defense**

Once the candidate incorporates and addresses all feedback from the chair, committee member, and director, the candidate discusses with the chair his or her readiness for the proposal defense and schedules a time for the defense. At this stage of the process, the candidate submits

his or her manuscript to SafeAssign, the university's plagiarism detection software, via the EDUC 988 SafeAssign submission link in Blackboard. It is the responsibility of the chair to review the results from this submission.

The formal proposal defense normally takes place via the university's e-conferencing system (WebEx) or by phone conference. The candidate is responsible for identifying dates and times convenient for the chair and committee member. The chair is responsible for facilitating the proposal defense via WebEx (instructions for setting up a WebEx meeting are provided in the SOE Doctoral Community in Blackboard).

#### **6.4 Defend the Proposal: Milestone Two**

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 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 following procedures are recommended for the formal proposal defense:

- Introductions and welcome
- Opening prayer by chair
- 10-15 minute presentation of PowerPoint by candidate
- Questions and comments from committee
- Dismissal of candidate for committee deliberation
- Chair will contact the candidate with the committee decision and any required revisions
- Chair will notify the SOE at [SOEDissertationRev@liberty.edu](mailto:SOEDissertationRev@liberty.edu) of the outcome of the proposal defense within 24 hours

A maximum of two proposals may be defended. Failure to successfully defend within two successive proposal defenses 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 Administrative Chair of Doctoral Programs and Research in consultation with the Director of Quantitative, Qualitative, or Applied Doctoral Research. Within 24 hours of a successful proposal defense, the dissertation chair must send the Proposal Defense Decision Form to [SOEDissertationRev@liberty.edu](mailto:SOEDissertationRev@liberty.edu) to inform the Doctoral Support Team when the candidate has successfully defended his or her proposal (see Appendix B for the Proposal Defense Decision Form). Failure to do so could result in the candidate being removed from the program.

## **7. IRB**

### **7.1 Submit IRB Application(s)**

After completion of a successful proposal defense, IRB review and approval is needed 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, ancillary material, and documentation of site permission(s) to his or her chair for an initial review and approval. The chair is responsible to ensure (a) candidates use the most current application retrieved directly from the [LU IRB website](#) and [IRB SOE webpage](#), (b) all applicable items are fully addressed and free from spelling or grammar errors, and (c) that correct templates provided by the IRB are used (e.g., the informed consent). Once the chair has reviewed and approved the IRB application (by completing the signature page of the application), the candidate will submit

the IRB application and all other related documents to [irb@liberty.edu](mailto:irb@liberty.edu) for review. The chair MUST be copied on all communication with the IRB.

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, IRB approval from those institutions will need to be obtained as directed by the specific institution's IRB. Permission from the research site may be sought prior to submitting the LU IRB application, but candidates must not begin recruiting participants until after receiving full IRB approval. If a candidate is unable to gain permission from the research site prior to submitting an application for IRB approval, LU IRB will review the rest of the application and issue a conditional approval letter to assist in obtaining needed site permission. Then once the candidate provides the applicable site permission documentation to the LU IRB, the IRB will change the conditional approval to a full approval, and the candidate may begin his or her research.

If the study will include faculty, students, or staff from *a single* department or group within LU, the candidate must obtain permission from the appropriate supervisor (e.g., Dean, Department Chair, Coach) and submit a signed letter or date/time stamped email to LU's IRB to verify approval to use students from that department or group. The candidate may submit the application without having obtained this permission; however, the IRB will not approve the study until proof of permission has been received. For studies that will include *only* SOE students, please contact [EDUCDissertation@liberty.edu](mailto:EDUCDissertation@liberty.edu) to request the Use of SOE Students in Research Form. If the study will include faculty, students, or staff from *multiple* departments or groups

within LU (e.g., all sophomores, LUO), the IRB will seek administrative approval on the candidate's behalf. Candidates should NOT contact the Provost's office directly.

Liberty University researchers planning to conduct survey research limited to LU students, faculty, and/or staff are required to use Qualtrics. Qualtrics is Liberty University's approved web-based survey software tool. It allows the user to construct and distribute complex surveys and provide statistical reports based on the results. For studies that will involve survey research with LU students, faculty, and or/staff please contact [EDUCDissertation@liberty.edu](mailto:EDUCDissertation@liberty.edu) for information about Qualtrics.

## **7.2 Receive IRB Approval: Milestone Three**

Although most IRB applications for educational research do not require full reviews, the IRB will make that decision. Candidates should refer to approval timeframes on the LU IRB website. Modifications to the application should be expected. Candidates should take care to thoroughly review the LU IRB website and incorporate all of the methodologist's feedback to avoid delays.

Execution of research **CANNOT** begin prior to receiving IRB 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 candidate must forward the IRB approval letter only, which includes the IRB approval number, to the Doctoral Support Team at [SOEDissertationRev@liberty.edu](mailto:SOEDissertationRev@liberty.edu).

## **8. The Dissertation**

### **8.1 Execute the Research and Develop Dissertation Manuscript**

After IRB approval is given and all necessary consents (adults) and/or assents (minors) are given from participants, the candidate executes his or her research, including data collection

and analysis. Each candidate should note that depending on his or her level of comfort, ability, and competence with the chosen quantitative, qualitative analysis, or applied research, he or she may seek an outside consultant. However, the candidate is held responsible to know, to understand, and to answer for ethical behavior, procedures, accuracy, interpretation, and integrity of the research design and analysis.

Under the guidance of the committee chair, the candidate refines Chapters One through Three and writes Chapters Four and Five. The committee chair may advise the candidate to seek guidance from the committee member (if applicable) on specific aspects or may require that the candidate seek an outside editor. The Quantitative, Qualitative, and Applied Dissertation Templates are provided in the SOE Doctoral Community.

## **8.2 Dissertation Review: Milestone Four**

The chair always reviews the dissertation manuscript first. When the chair is satisfied with the dissertation and has given approval, the chair disseminates the manuscript to the committee member for feedback. Committee member reviews can take up to two weeks. Whichever member of the committee is serving as the methodologist will provide feedback on the manuscript, with a specific focus on the research methods. Once the committee is satisfied with the dissertation, the chair will send it to [SOEDissertationRev@liberty.edu](mailto:SOEDissertationRev@liberty.edu) for a review by either the Director of Quantitative, Qualitative, or Applied Doctoral Research. A director review can take up to two weeks. *No dissertation defense can take place without approval either the Director of Quantitative, Qualitative, or Applied Doctoral Research.*

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

The final defense cannot be scheduled until the chair, committee member, and director have reviewed the dissertation and each granted approval for a final defense. 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 dissertation chair and/or committee member 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.

#### **8.4 Schedule a Dissertation Defense (Register for EDUC 990)**

Ultimately, the chair and committee member, with approval from either the Director of Quantitative, Qualitative, or Applied Doctoral Research, decide when the manuscript is approved for defense. In the rare instance where the chair and committee member may disagree about the candidate's readiness for the defense, the Director of Quantitative, Qualitative, or Applied Doctoral Research may make the final decision.

Once the dissertation manuscript is approved by the committee and director, the candidate and chair will schedule a time for the defense. The candidate is responsible for identifying dates and times convenient for the committee and for providing a list of dates and times to the chair. The defense date must be scheduled and the defense successfully completed at least four weeks prior to the last day of the semester term (deadlines for each semester are noted in the SOE Doctoral Community in Blackboard).

Once a date and time are established, the candidate is also responsible for preparing and forwarding the Dissertation Announcement Template (available in the SOE Doctoral Community in Blackboard) and SafeAssign report of the manuscript to the Doctoral Support Team at [SOEDissertationRev@liberty.edu](mailto:SOEDissertationRev@liberty.edu) (including the chair in the CC line) to schedule the defense. The candidate should submit the dissertation manuscript to SafeAssign in EDUC 989. The chair should review the SafeAssign report to ensure it is acceptable before the candidate submits the Dissertation Announcement Template.

The doctoral support staff will post the defense time and date in the Dissertation Defense Calendar. The dissertation support staff also e-mails an Outlook appointment to the candidate, chair, and committee member. Once this Outlook appointment is sent, the date and time of the defense is considered to be officially set. The chair is responsible for informing each committee member of the date, time, and procedures of the defense. The chair is also responsible for scheduling and facilitating the WebEx meeting for the defense (instructions for setting up a WebEx meeting are provided in the SOE Doctoral Community in Blackboard).

When the defense date and time are finalized, the candidate will be moved from EDUC 989 to EDUC 990 by the Doctoral Support Team. **Please note that a candidate may not enroll in EDUC 990 without a confirmed dissertation defense date by all parties involved.**

Candidates should remain enrolled in EDUC 989 until a final defense is scheduled with the SOE.

### **8.5 Pre-defense**

One to two weeks prior to the defense, the chair may schedule and conduct a pre-defense phone call or e-conferencing session to finalize the defense details and complete a practice defense. This is a good opportunity to make sure WebEx works well for the candidate and committee members before the final defense date. At the chair's discretion, the pre-defense conference may include only the chair and candidate.

### **8.6 Preparing for the Defense**

The candidate is responsible for emailing the final copy of the dissertation manuscript to the committee approximately two weeks prior to the dissertation defense. The candidate prepares a 15-20 minute presentation of his or her dissertation for the defense; a visual presentation (e.g., PowerPoint) is required. The presentation should be sent to the committee at least one week prior to the defense. The candidate should check with the committee to see if

they would like to receive a printed copy of the dissertation at least one week prior to the final defense. 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 defense runs smoothly. WebEx must be used for distance defenses, and the chair is responsible for setting up the WebEx meeting (instructions for setting up a WebEx meeting are provided in the SOE Doctoral Community in Blackboard). Only the candidate is required to share video through WebEx during the defense.

### **8.7 Defend the Dissertation: Milestone Five**

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 SOE doctoral students. The following procedures are recommended:

- Introductions and welcome
- Opening prayer by chair and introduction of the committee and candidate
- 15-20 minute presentation by candidate
- Questions and comments from the committee
- Questions and comments from the SOE 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 methods, 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 committee members will ask questions. Following questions and discussion, all individuals not on the committee, including the candidate, will disconnect to provide the committee the opportunity to discuss the defense. Using the Dissertation Defense Decision Form for guidance, the committee will make a decision (see Appendix B for Dissertation Defense Decision Form and related rubrics). The candidate is invited to reconnect, and the chair will inform the candidate of the outcome. The committee makes one of the following decisions:

- Approved with no revisions 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. Within 24 hours of the defense, the chair should send the Dissertation Defense Decision Form (which includes a final grade) to [SOEDissertationRev@liberty.edu](mailto:SOEDissertationRev@liberty.edu) so that the Doctoral Support Team can post the final grade in EDUC 990.

## **9. Publication and Graduation**

Upon approval from the chair, the candidate follows the Jerry Falwell Library (JFL)

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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 EDUC 990 cannot be posted without the JFL confirmation e-mail evidencing that the dissertation is accepted. This email must be forwarded to [SOEDissertationRev@liberty.edu](mailto:SOEDissertationRev@liberty.edu) by the last day of the term in order to receive a final grade for EDUC 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 e-mail from the JFL.

As a reminder, the candidate must complete 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**

### **The Chair**

#### **Qualifications**

- Full time LU faculty member or approved chair found in the Chair/Committee Member search section of the SOE Doctoral Community in Blackboard.
- Must hold an earned doctorate degree from a regionally accredited university. This normally means a Ph.D. or Ed.D. in an education-related field.

#### **Responsibilities**

- Provides mentorship to doctoral candidates (no more than six) through the dissertation process as outlined in the Dissertation Handbook, from the development of the proposal to the final publishing of the dissertation. This includes providing timely and thorough feedback. All feedback on manuscripts, unless otherwise communicated to the candidate, should be provided within a two to four week timeframe.
- Provides feedback on doctoral candidate's skills and provides necessary referrals for additional support.
- Ensures that the proposal and the dissertation manuscript comply with all university criteria and are acceptable scholarly works, including conformity to content, structure, format, style, and ethical guidelines.
- Ensures frequent communication with candidate and consultation with committee member.
- Communicates with the committee member frequently and welcomes his or her suggestions for the candidate's manuscript.
- Uses all dissertation technologies as outlined in the Dissertation Handbook. Completes

Blackboard responsibilities as outlined in the dissertation handbook.

- Completes necessary forms and rubrics as outlined in the dissertation handbook.
- Makes proposal and dissertation defense arrangements.
- If the chair is the methodologist on the committee, he or she will also be directly responsible for ensuring that the highest standards are met regarding research methods, design, procedures, and analysis (primarily Chapters Three and Four of the dissertation).

### **Committee Member**

#### **Qualifications**

- Approved School of Education *committee member* found in the Chair/Committee Member search section of the SOE Doctoral Community.
- Must hold an earned doctorate degree from a regionally accredited university. This normally means a Ph.D. or Ed.D. in an education-related field.

#### **Responsibilities**

- Provides mentorship to doctoral candidate through the dissertation process as outlined in the Dissertation Handbook, from the development of the prospectus to the final publishing of the dissertation. This includes providing timely and thorough feedback.
- Works collaboratively with the committee chair to guide the candidate in the dissertation process. All feedback on manuscripts, unless otherwise communicated to the candidate, should be provided within a two week timeframe.
- If the committee member is the methodologist on the committee, he or she will also be directly responsible for ensuring that the highest standards are met regarding research methods, design, procedures, and analysis (primarily Chapters Three and Four of the dissertation).

## Appendix B: Proposal and Dissertation Defense Decision Form

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#### Proposal and Dissertation Defense Decision Form

**Proposal (complete first page of this form only)**

**Dissertation (complete all pages of this form)**

**Chair:** After completing the form, submit the form to the committee for input and for approval. Once the committee has approved the form, email it to [SOEDissertationRev@liberty.edu](mailto:SOEDissertationRev@liberty.edu).

Date	
------	--

Title	
-------	--

Role	Name
Candidate	
Chair	
Committee Member	
Committee Member	

#### 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 (if applicable):

**(For final dissertation defense only, please continue to the rubrics on the following pages.)**

Candidate grade to be assigned for EDUC 990 (please check one):

\_\_\_\_\_A      \_\_\_\_\_B      \_\_\_\_\_C      \_\_\_\_\_D      \_\_\_\_\_F

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

	<b>Advanced</b> (3 pts)	<b>Proficient</b> (2 pts)	<b>Developing</b> (1 pt)
<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 evaluates, synthesizes, and interprets educational research through presentation of data and findings.	The candidate evaluates and interprets educational 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, and clearly and fluently demonstrates effective	The candidate demonstrates poised and effective communication in	The candidate lacks poise, and does not present

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

	<b>Advanced</b> (3 pts)	<b>Proficient</b> (2 pts)	<b>Developing</b> (1 pt)
	communication in writing, while speaking, and while listening to others.	writing, and while speaking during the presentation.	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</b> (3 pts)	<b>Proficient</b> (2 pts)	<b>Developing</b> (1 pt)
<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.
<b>Results/ Outcomes</b>	The candidate clearly evaluates, synthesizes, and interprets educational research through presentation of data and findings.	The candidate evaluates and interprets educational research through presentation of data and findings.	The candidate does not clearly present findings and data analysis.

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

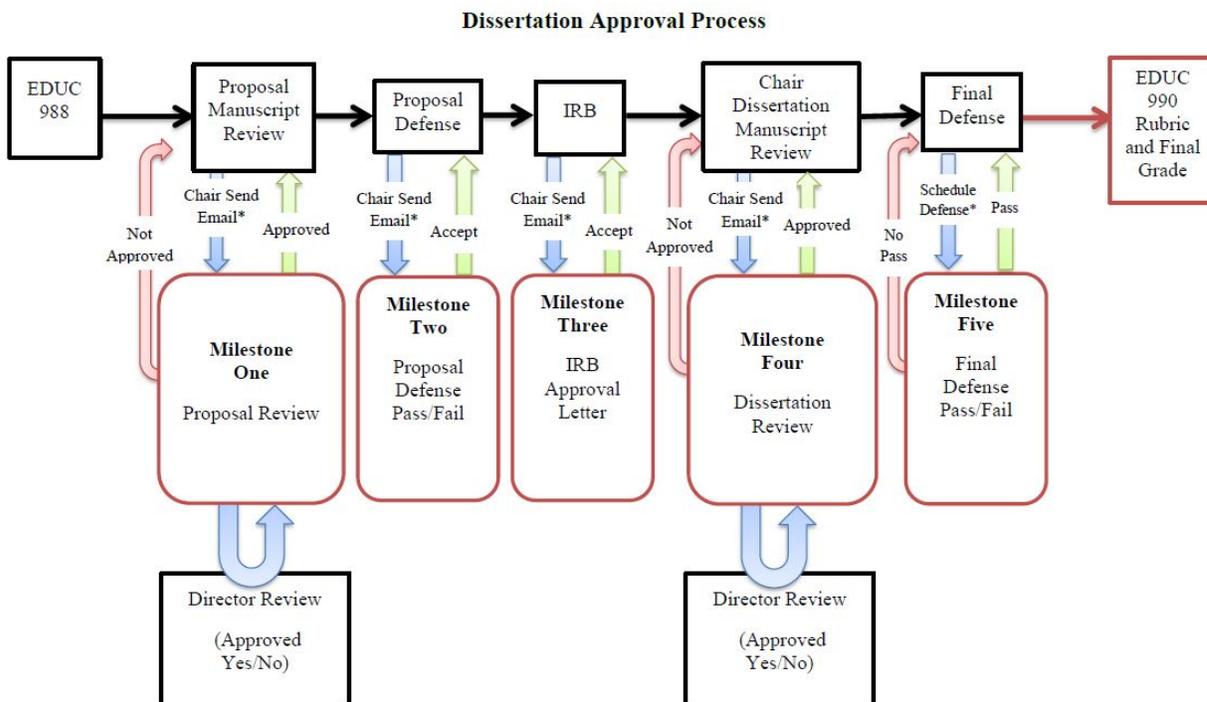
	<b>Advanced</b> (3 pts)	<b>Proficient</b> (2 pts)	<b>Developing</b> (1 pt)
<b>Discussion and Summary</b>	The candidate demonstrates complete ability to conduct and interpret a study through discussion of the findings and results to conduct an independent research investigation that contributes to the 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.
<b>Professional Publication</b>	The candidate submits clear documentation (including a draft of an article) of plans and procedures for publication of the dissertation findings in a professional journal.	The candidate submits documentation and tentative plans for publication of the dissertation findings in a professional journal.	The candidate is unable to articulate plans for publication in a professional journal.

<b>Disposition Rubric</b>					
<b>In your work with the doctoral candidate, has he or she displayed the following dispositions?</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b> (4 pts)	<b>Agree</b> (3 pts)	<b>Neither Agree or Disagree</b> (2 pts)	<b>Disagree</b> (1 pt)	<b>Strongly Disagree</b> (0 pt)
<b>Social Responsibility</b>					
<b>Commitment / Work Ethic</b>					

<b>Disposition Rubric</b>					
<b>In your work with the doctoral candidate, has he or she displayed the following dispositions?</b>	<b>Strongly Agree (4 pts)</b>	<b>Agree (3 pts)</b>	<b>Neither Agree or Disagree (2 pts)</b>	<b>Disagree (1 pt)</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree (0 pt)</b>
<b>Reflection</b>					
<b>Integrity</b>					
<b>Professionalism</b>					

### Appendix C: Dissertation Approval Process

Below is a visual representation of the dissertation approval process showing the order of major milestones and flow of the overall process.



\*Send email to [SOEDissertationRev@liberty.edu](mailto:SOEDissertationRev@liberty.edu)