Dissertation Handbook 2018

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Ashford University

www.ashford.edu

QUICK GUIDE

SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS

⚠️	This symbol is used throughout this document to draw attention to important or critical reminders.
💡	This symbol is used to point out tips and tricks to help you throughout the dissertation process.
DS	Dissertation Specialist
IRB	Institutional Review Board
LOI	Letter of Intent
MR	Methodological Reader
DP	Dissertation Planning course
DSEM	Dissertation Scholarship Editorial Manager

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

As a doctoral student, it is critically important for you to demonstrate your ability to conduct systematic investigations and examine significant issues or problems in your field of research. The dissertation is a culminating academic milestone in your degree program and allows you to demonstrate pertinent knowledge, skills, research expertise, and the ability to advance theory in your discipline. As a requirement for graduation from Ashford University (AU) with a degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) or, optionally for a non-PhD degree, each student must complete and successfully defend a dissertation.

Use this Handbook for information on the overall process involved in dissertation and the AU requirements for fulfilling this task. Since the Handbook outlines an important part of your doctoral journey, we suggest reading it, and all accompanying documents, at the beginning of your program, and referencing them as necessary throughout your studies. If you have any questions, please email dissertation.online@rockies.edu.

1.1 THE PURPOSE OF THE DISSERTATION

The dissertation is a formal, comprehensive report that details the purpose, background research, methodology, data collection and analysis, and conclusions of an **original research study**.

The dissertation is intended to:

- Enhance your understanding of your field of study;
- Provide experience conducting research in your field of study;
- Develop your ability to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate data and conclusions in your field of study;
- Make a significant contribution to the field of study;
- Include a thorough review of associated professional literature;
- Demonstrate your ability to design and carry out an individual, original research project;
- Include advanced research design and analysis;
- Demonstrate a clear understanding of basic research principles, techniques, and ethics;
- Demonstrate evidence of your ability to analyze and synthesize data, as well as draw and evaluate conclusions;
- Develop skills in project planning, time management, organization, and implementation; and
- Show evidence of a high level of professional competence.

It is important to keep in mind that the dissertation is not just another school assignment. A dissertation study is intended to make a significant contribution to the research literature in the field. It must be scholarly, succinct, and of sufficiently high quality to be published in part in a peer-reviewed journal. The dissertation may be cataloged and available to other researchers – seasoned professionals and academics, as well as future students – all over the world.

1.2 ACCEPTABLE TYPES OF RESEARCH

The following list provides examples of the types of research that could be carried out in alignment with the dissertation standards at Ashford University. This list is intended to be illustrative and not exhaustive – students are permitted to propose creative ideas for research that adheres to quality standards.

- Quantitative studies (e.g., Descriptive, Correlational, Causal-Comparative, Experimental, Quasi-Experimental, Meta-Analysis);
- Qualitative studies (e.g., Basic Interpretive Qualitative Research, Phenomenological Research, Grounded Theory, Case Study, Ethnography, Narrative Analysis, Critical research); and
- Mixed-methods studies (combines qualitative and quantitative methods).

As can be seen from this list, all require an extensive knowledge of the literature pertaining to your chosen topic, a synthesis and application of this knowledge, and sophistication on how the research is collected and analyzed. Conducting this research provides you with an experience that creates expertise in a focused research area and prepares you to be an effective scholar-practitioner.

The following types of research are NOT acceptable:
- Animal research
- Medical research

All proposals must be reviewed and approved by your Dissertation Committee (including your Chair, Dissertation Committee Member, and Methodological Reader (MR)) and the Institutional Review Board (IRB) before data collection begins. Your Dissertation Committee will evaluate all projects for content and design appropriateness, while the IRB will guarantee that the study is ethically sound.

Additional information about avoiding "unapproved research" is outlined in the *Ashford University Academic Catalog* policy (see Student Rights and Responsibilities section: Academic Integrity Violations and Unapproved Research).

Remember, you **may not begin** data collection prior to approval of your proposal by your Dissertation Committee **and** the IRB. (See section 2.1 for steps in the Dissertation process)

1.3 DISSERTATION-RELATED COURSES

As part of the dissertation process, you will enroll in specific dissertation related courses that will get you thinking about your topic and how that topic may lead to your specific research study.

PREPARATION COURSES
- Three in-residence workshops throughout your coursework will get you started on developing your dissertation topic, problem, and research questions. (non-credit)
- Scholarly Argument I (3 credits)
- Scholarly Argument II (3 credits)
- Qualitative and Quantitative research courses according to your program (3 credits each)

Be sure to attend three In-residence workshops throughout your program. Do not wait until the end of your coursework to start your dissertation!

DISSERTATION PLANNING AND DISSERTATION COURSES

Students must complete the following courses following their Capstone course to complete the dissertation process:

- Dissertation Planning I (1 credit, 9 weeks)
- Dissertation Planning II (1 credit, 9 weeks)
- Dissertation (1 credit per 9-week term, 5 terms)
- Dissertation Extension (as needed) (1 credit per 9-week term)

1.4 DISSERTATION COMMITTEE

The Dissertation Committee provides a doctoral student with the direction, guidance, support, and feedback needed to complete the dissertation. This Committee consists of three qualified Ashford University faculty members:

Dissertation Committee (3 members)
Committee Chair – chosen by student or assigned by the university
Committee Member- assigned by the university
Methodological Reader – assigned by the university

Each member of the Dissertation has a specific role as follows:

- The **Committee Chair** oversees the dissertation process and serves as the project manager over the process. The Chair facilitates the dissertation courses and the relationship between you (as the student), the rest of the Committee, and the others involved with administration of the dissertation. Reviewing and providing feedback on each dissertation milestone, the Chair assists with finalizing the Letter of Intent (LOI), formulating the proposal, compiling the Institutional Review Board (IRB) application, conducting the research, and finalizing the manuscript. The Chair is responsible for working with the student and the student's Dissertation Committee to ensure that the student designs and executes a quality and defensible doctoral project that is aligned with generally accepted research practices, university policies, and IRB requirements.

- The **Committee Member** supports the Chair as the reviewer of your proposal and dissertation manuscript and participates in the Preliminary Oral Defense and Final Oral Defense. The focus of the Committee Member will be on the subject matter alignment, currency, and relevance to theory and practice.

- The **Methodological Reader** (MR) reviews the LOI, proposal, and manuscript and has the responsibility to ensure methodological quality. The MR offers recommendations and serves as methodological consultant to you and your Chair.

Non-AU Faculty Committee Members (External Members) are no longer allowed as part of a student's Dissertation Committee. Students may work with external consultants to get expert opinions about their studies. Non-AU Faculty individuals may attend student Oral Defenses as those are open to university and non-university personnel, but they are not considered Committee Members.

1.5 COMMITTEE SELECTION

You will have the option to choose your Committee Chair, however your Committee Member and Methodological Reader (MR) are assigned by the university.

All Dissertation Chair candidates and Committee Member candidates are vetted for content area and research methods expertise by completing a *Dissertation Committee Member Expertise Survey* and providing a biography that describes their experience and approach to the student research process.

1.5.1 CHAIR SELECTION

Chair selection takes place during your second Dissertation Planning (DP) course. During DP II, you will engage in a discussion forum activity to begin the chair search process. At that time, a summary of available faculty, their biographies, and contact information is made available to you. You will have the option of contacting available chairs during the selection process and faculty have the option to accept or refuse assignments. In other words, both you and the potential chairs are involved in the student-chair selection process. Students are encouraged to use the Compatibility Template (Appendix G) provided in the assignment before they reach out to faculty. Students are instructed to send their partially completed Letter of Intent (LOI) to potential chair candidates so that faculty can understand the nature and scope of your proposed research project.

Once you have chosen a Chair, you must fill out a **Chair Request** form and submit it through the Dissertation Scholarship Editorial Manager (DSEM) for your chosen faculty Chair to approve. If you are unable, or choose not, to select a Chair through your own search process, a Chair will be assigned to you before the end of your DP II course.

Finalization of Chair selection is made by the university before you complete DP II—your initial Chair selection may be denied if the university believes the proposed Chair is not qualified, or already has too many students. You will start your dissertation class with your chosen Chair and a university assigned Methodological Reader (MR) immediately following the DP II. A Committee Member will be assigned after you have an LOI approved by both the Chair and MR.

If you need to change the Committee Chair, you should contact your Dissertation Specialist (DS). You will repeat the selection process, and then complete the **Request to Change Chairperson or Committee Member** form (See section 1.7).

1.5.2 COMMITTEE MEMBER ASSIGNMENT

The Committee Member will be assigned to your Dissertation Committee by the university **once you have an approved Letter of Intent (LOI)**.

If you have a Committee Member in mind, you should communicate that name to your Dissertation Specialist (DS), but in most cases your Committee Member will be assigned by the university. The Committee Member is chosen by matching your study's content area and design with the expertise of available Committee Members. That Committee Member will be enrolled as a secondary instructor in your dissertation classroom starting with your next term after the assignment. The DS will communicate the assigned Committee Member name and contact information to you and your Chair. You and your Chair should welcome the Committee Member to the Committee and pass on any appropriate information.

1.5.3 METHODOLOGICAL READER ASSIGNMENT

The Methodological Reader (MR) is assigned to your Dissertation Committee by the university before you complete the Dissertation Planning (DP) II course. You will start your first dissertation class immediately following DP II with your chosen Chair and an assigned MR.

1.6 COMMITTEE COMMUNICATION

You and your Chair should communicate regularly via your dissertation classroom and the Canvas Inbox. Though email and phone calls and other communication methods outside your Canvas classroom are allowed, you should **summarize those interactions in the weekly discussion forums in your classroom**.

All communication between you and your Dissertation Committee should be timely, respectful, and professional. It is your responsibility to notify your Chair of any and all academic concerns. Examples of academic issues include, but are not limited to: transition point deliverable content, structure, and format; results of reviews by Committee Members and Methodological Readers; or alignment of Committee Members to your discipline or topic. You are also encouraged to contact your Chair if you get "stuck" or need help with parts of your study or want to understand the dissertation process.

Work with your Chair to develop a communication plan with each other and with the other members of your Dissertation Committee. Be sure to:

- Develop a plan to utilize a variety of synchronous and asynchronous communication tools;
- Schedule periodic check-ins;
- Post files in the classroom that need to be reviewed by others;
- Post a written record of verbal communications (e.g., meeting notes, summaries of telephone conversations, etc.) in the Canvas classroom; and
- Use the Canvas email function to email in order to keep a record of contents of emails.

⚠️ **It is important to keep a written record of all interactions between you, your Chair, and Committee Members in the Canvas classroom**.

The type and rhythm of feedback you receive for your Letter of Intent (LOI), proposal, and dissertation drafts may be different than when you were submitting assignments for feedback and grades in your content courses earlier in your program. You are learning how scholarly feedback is given and received, and you should expect that there may be differences in opinions and ideas that should be discussed using supporting evidence and logic. Committee communication and discussion of review feedback should be collaborative. Your Chair can help you in resolving differences between feedback from different members of your Committee. Collegial communication should also extend beyond the Committee to all members of the university community.

In cases where the Chair cannot help the Committee to resolve differences, the Chair can reach out to the Dean directly. A change of the personnel in a student's Committee should not be taken lightly, but can be requested (See section 1.7).

1.7 COMMITTEE CHANGES

Given the length of time it takes to complete your dissertation, you may experience changes to your Committee during your program. If such changes do occur, the university will work to make the transition as smooth as possible for you and work to ensure, to the extent possible, that such changes help you progress towards degree completion. You may request to replace a Committee Member (Chair, Committee Member, or Methodological Reader (MR)) but to do so you must consult with your Dissertation Specialist (DS) and follow a formal process (see below).

A Chair change may be accomplished by contacting your DS to obtain a list of available faculty, contacting several and choosing one, and then completing the **Request to Change Chairperson or Committee Member** form.

Committee Member changes may be accomplished by contacting your DS. After investigating the circumstances, a new Committee Member may then be assigned by the university.

A request to change the MR may be made by your Chair directly to the Dean for consideration.

Other requests for Committee change (request by a member of the committee, sickness, resignation from the university, etc.) may be made directly to the Dean for consideration and reassignment.

Occasionally, the Dean may request a change in Chair, Committee Member, or MR. Reasons for the change may be to better support you, to balance faculty load, or to meet university or federal requirements. In all cases, consideration of your well-fare and progress will guide decisions and communication of changes will include all affected parties.

2.0 OVERVIEW OF THE DISSERTATION PROCESS

This section is an overview of the steps involved in completing the dissertation process. It is important to familiarize yourself with this information from the beginning of your doctoral program. This chapter covers the following:

- Seven steps in the dissertation process;
- Dissertation Scholarship Editorial Manager (DSEM) program to submit transition point deliverables for approval; and
- Roles of individuals and boards involved in the dissertation process.

2.1 SEVEN STEPS OF THE DISSERTATION PROCESS

The dissertation process is composed of seven major steps, each completed through an approval process referred to as a "Transition Point," that the student must pass through in order to complete the process.

1. Letter of Intent (LOI)
2. Proposal Review
3. Preliminary Oral Defense
4. Institutional Review Board (IRB) Review
5. Final Review
6. Final Oral Defense
7. Final Manuscript Review/Dean's Review

> Students **must** complete Transition Points in order. Approval at each Transition Point is required before proceeding to the next step of the process.

The following table illustrates the deliverables, approvers, and method of approval for each transition point:

Dissertation Transition Point	Deliverable	Must be Approved by*	Method of Approval
Letter of Intent	LOI	• Chair • Methodological Reader	Submission/Approval through DSEM (LOI)
Proposal Review	Chapters I-III	• Chair • Committee Member • Methodological Reader	Submission/Approval through DSEM (Proposal Research Review)
Preliminary Oral Defense	Evaluation Form	• Chair • Committee Member • Methodological Reader (optional)	Evaluation Form approved by Chair
IRB Review	IRB Request, Summary, & attachments	• Chair • Institutional Review Board (IRB)	Signed by Chair; approved by IRB (see **IRB Handbook** for submission details)
Final Review	Chapters I - V	• Chair • Committee Member • Methodological Reader	Submission/Approval through DSEM (Final Research Review)
Final Oral Defense	PowerPoint Presentation	• Chair • Committee Member • Methodological Reader (optional)	Evaluation by Chair through DSEM
Final Manuscript Review/Dean's Review	Signed final manuscript	• APA Editor (signed form) • Dean's Editor • Dean	Submission/Approval through DSEM (Final Manuscript Submission)

* All must agree to *Approve* or *Approve with Changes* before the student can move on to the next Transition Point.

Note that only the Chair and Methodological Reader (MR) must approve the student's LOI, while all members of the Committee must approve the student's Proposal and Final Review. The MR may attend the student's Oral Defense(s), but is not required to.

You will make many of the submissions through the Dissertation Scholarship Editorial Manager (DSEM), (see section 2.2). After you submit the required documents for a particular transition point, the required

approvers should receive a notice through DSEM to review and approve the submission, make comments, and/or not approve the submission.

2.2 DISSERTATION SCHOLARSHIP EDITORIAL MANAGER (DSEM)

The Dissertation Scholarship Editorial Manager (DSEM) is an online document management system used to submit deliverables and document approvals at most transition points. See http://www.editorialmanager.com/uords/ and follow the instructions for "First-time users" to register as an Author. Special instructions for Students can also be found on the opening page.

See section 2.1 or Appendix A for which transition points use DSEM for submission and approval. After a student submits the required documents for a particular transition point, required reviewers (Chair, Committee Member, and/or Methodological Reader (MR)) should receive a notice through DSEM to review and approve the submission. In many cases, reviewers will also be given an opportunity to make comments and/or to not approve the submission.

It is expected that much work will be communicated between you and your Committee prior to being ready to submit to DSEM for formal review. You should first get informal approval from your Chair, Committee Member (if needed), and MR (if needed) before submitting to DSEM, making approval through DSEM a process of officially documenting the approval.

2.3 INVOLVED PARTIES

There are several people involved throughout the dissertation process. A detailed table of the roles and responsibilities of university members who support the dissertation process follows:

- Student
- Chair
- Committee Member
- Methodological Reader (MR)
- Dissertation Specialist (DS)
- Institutional Review Board (IRB)
- Dean
- Registrar
- APA Style Editor

Role	Responsibilities
You (the student)	• Make satisfactory progress in your dissertation courses by setting goals and expectations with your Chair and meeting those goals • Complete all: 　○ Required courses, including Dissertation Planning (DP) Courses and Dissertation credits 　○ Deliverables for "Transition Points," in order 　○ Submission of deliverables in a timely fashion via the DSEM • Work closely with Chair and Committee • Communicate regularly with your Dissertation Specialist (DS) through phone or emails: dissertation.online@rockies.edu
Chair*	• Guides you in: 　○ Setting goals for each course 　○ Managing relationship with the Committee 　○ Preparing for research 　○ Defining and finalizing a research topic 　○ Developing a timeline to complete the research 　○ Developing the Proposal and full Dissertation 　○ Conducting research and analyzing data • Reviews and Approves your: 　○ Letter of Intent (LOI) 　○ Proposal (in conjunction with Committee) 　○ **Request for IRB Review** and **IRB Research Summary** 　○ Final Review (in conjunction with Committee) • Oversees and Evaluates your: 　○ Dissertation Courses, issuing grades, including P/PR or NP 　○ Preliminary Oral Defense 　○ Final Oral Defense 　○ Full Dissertation • Signs or Approves in DSEM: 　○ **Chair Request** 　○ **Request for Oral Defense**- Preliminary (optional) 　○ **Oral Defense Evaluation** (Preliminary) 　○ **Request for IRB Review** 　○ **IRB Change Matrix Chair Authorization** (for resubmission to IRB)

	IRB Report of Change **IRB Request for Renewal** **IRB Close-Out Form** **Request for Oral Defense** (Final) (optional) - Oral Defense Evaluation (Final) - Sign Title Page of manuscript
Committee Member*	- Guides you in: - Developing Proposal - Conducting research and analyzing data - Reviews and Approves your: - Proposal - Final Review - Evaluates your: - Preliminary Oral Defense - Final Oral Defense
Methodological Reader*	The purpose of the Methodological Reader (MR) is to ensure academic rigor, quality, and appropriateness of a proposed research study, evaluating particularly the alignment of the research problem and questions with the research methodology and design. The MR will review the dissertation at various stages of its development to provide approval and feedback on research methodology issues. The MR does not act as a subject matter expert on the content of the dissertation itself, which is the responsibility of the Chair and other Committee Members. - Reviews and Approves your: - Letter of Intent (in conjunction with Chair) - Proposal (in conjunction with Committee) - Final Review (in conjunction with Committee)
Dissertation Specialist (DS)	- Advises and Helps you: - Enroll in dissertation courses - Understand the timeline and scheduling requirements for enrolling in courses - Communicates: - with you via the dissertation.online@rockies.edu e-mail account - with the Methodological Reader, IRB, Dean, and Registrar on student's behalf regarding dissertation related issues and forms - feedback and status updates from the IRB, Dean, and Registrar to student - Receives and Registers:

	- All forms - Process questions - Questions about the DSEM - LOI through DSEM - Proposal through DSEM **Request for IRB Review** and **IRB Research Summary** and **IRB Close-Out Form** - Final Review through DSEM - Final Manuscript through DSEM
Institutional Research Board (IRB)	The purpose of the IRB is to ensure ethical research practices among its students and faculty. Anyone affiliated with Ashford University who is pursuing a research project must receive approval from the IRB before commencing the study. See **IRB Handbook** for more information about processes and forms. - Reviews and Approves: **Request for IRB Review** **IRB Research Summary** **IRB related forms (**see **IRB Handbook):** **Request for IRB Review/ IRB Research Summary** - Certificate of Completion of the online Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) Human Subjects Research Tutorial **IRB Report of Change** (as needed) **IRB Request for Renewal** (as needed) **IRB Change Matrix Chair Authorization** (as needed) **IRB Close-Out Form** - Receives: - Certificate of completion of the online Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) Human Subjects Research Tutorial
Dean (or Designee)	- Reviews and Approves: - Final Manuscript - Signs: **Request to Change Chairperson or Committee Member**
Registrar	- Reviews and Approves: **Petition to Graduate Form - Doctoral Programs** - Communicates with you about: - Graduation requirements - Conducts:

	o Final graduation audit

APA Style Editor	• Is an independent contractor you may hire either early or later in writing your proposal and final manuscript to certify the formatting complies with APA and Ashford University style guide (see Appendix C). (Note that you may do your own editing, but have someone very familiar with APA and AU style guide sign the Certification of APA Style Compliance in order to pass the Final Manuscript Review).
	
	 ⚠️ **A list of editors familiar with Ashford University formatting style guide may be obtained from your DS.**
	
	 • Reviews and Edits:
	   o Dissertation for adherence to APA and Ashford University formatting style guide as indicated in Appendix C
	 • Signs:
	   o **Certification of APA Style Compliance**

*See Section 1.4 for more information on Chair and Committee responsibilities.

2.4 TRANSITION POINT PROCESSES

As outlined in Section 2.1, there are seven steps to the dissertation process. These steps have been designated as "Transition Points" as they are required by the University for you to pass through to graduate. You must have approval to pass through each point, and you must pass through them in order. The following table provides more information about each Transition Point.

Transition Point	Description	When	Must be Approved by
I. Letter of Intent (LOI)	A preliminary proposal for justifying the dissertation.	After working with Chair; usually developed during DP Planning II, but may be later	• Chair • Methodological Reader
Notes:	• LOI is uploaded into DSEM by the student. • The Chair and Methodological Reader (MR) are required to approve the LOI via the DSEM. • If approval is not obtained, reasons will be provided to the student. • If the LOI is not Approved, resubmittal is required. • The revised LOI (if necessary) should be uploaded into DSEM by the student and approved online by the Dissertation Chair and MR.		
II. Proposal Review	Review of the Proposal for internal consistency, appropriateness of research	Upon completion of the Proposal	• Chair • Committee Member

	questions and methods, review of related research and literature, and compliance with research standards.		• Methodological Reader
Notes:	• Proposal is uploaded into DSEM by the student, along with a Turnitin report. • Committee references **Appendix B** and the rubric in DSEM to ascertain that the proposal is complete and meets minimum standards. • The full Committee is required to approve the proposal via the DSEM.		
III. Preliminary Oral Defense	An oral presentation by the student to the Committee for additional feedback on the proposal and on possible areas of improvement to successfully complete the Dissertation.	After approval by the full Committee	• Chair • Committee • Methodological Reader (optional)
Notes:	• If a University-provided telephone conference line is needed, student must submit **Request for Oral Defense**. • The Chair and Committee Member must attend and approve of the proposal via the evaluation of the defense. • Chair must complete and submit **Oral Defense Evaluation** to dissertation.online@rockies.edu within 48 hours. • Approval may require additional proposal drafts following the Proposal Defense.		
IV. IRB Review	Review of the proposal by the IRB: a federal requirement to ensure that research participants are protected under the proposal's design and processes.	After passing the Preliminary Oral Defense	• Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Notes:	• There are three types of IRB review: Exempt, Expedited, and Full. Please see the **IRB Handbook** for a full description of each of these and criteria for approval.
	• For a Full Review, you must submit your request for review by the 15th of the previous month for the most efficient consideration.
	• You must submit the following as part of the IRB submittal:
	   ○ **IRB Research Summary**
	   ○ **Request for IRB Review**
	   ○ CITI completion report (Certificate of completion of the online Human Subjects Research Tutorial)
	• The IRB reviews the submission and either approves it, approves it with specific conditions, or rejects the application with suggestions for major changes required for protection of human participants.
	• Full Reviews may require you to present to the IRB.
	• If the application is not approved by the IRB, you are expected to address IRB comments, complete an **IRB Change Matrix**, and have the Chair submit a **IRB Change Matrix Chair Authorization** to sign off on the resubmission.		

	• Once IRB approval is obtained, you will be given an IRB Letter of Approval and may begin to implement the dissertation and collect data. • If you revise the research design or make changes to your Committee, the **IRB Report of Change** form may need to be submitted. • Upon completion of data collection submit the **IRB Close-Out Form.** ⚠️ **The IRB Close-Out Form must be submitted prior to Final Manuscript Review.**		
V. Full Dissertation Review	A review of the full Dissertation to assess consistency and accuracy of research questions, methods, analyses, reported results, and compliance with research standards.	Upon completion of entire Dissertation	• Chair • Committee • Methodological Reader
Notes:	• Proposal is uploaded into DSEM by the student, along with a Turnitin report. • The Committee references **Appendix B** and the rubric in DSEM to ascertain that the proposal is complete and meets minimum standards. • The full Committee is required to approve the proposal via the DSEM. • Once the Committee approves the Dissertation, you are ready for the Final Defense.		
VI. Final Defense	An oral presentation to the Committee for the purpose of ensuring that an academically acceptable Dissertation has been conducted.	After preliminary approval of the final Dissertation by the Committee	• Chair • Committee • Methodological Reader (optional)
Notes:	• Full Committee approval is needed before scheduling the Final Defense. ⚠️ **Student must be enrolled in a term of Dissertation or Dissertation Extension when the Final Oral Defense is held.** • Student may submit **Request for Oral Defense** if a telephone conference line or physical room is needed. • The full Committee must attend and approve of the Dissertation. It is the Chair's responsibility to get consensus and instruct student to submit the PowerPoint to DSEM. The Chair then must approve (either "Approved" or "Approved with Changes") through DSEM. • If the student prematurely submits for approval through DSEM, the Chair may assign a "Resubmission Required" decision. • Approval may require additional Dissertation drafts following the Final Defense.		
VII. Final Manuscript Review	Review of the final manuscript to ensure that it meets University requirements.	After passing the Final Defense, approval of the Committee, and sending the Dissertation through an APA editor	• APA Editor • Dean's Editor • Dean or designee

Notes:	• An APA editor signed **Certification of APA Style Compliance** should be submitted along with the complete Dissertation manuscript.
	• The final Dissertation should be sent through DSEM, including a University approved title page **signed by the Chair** (See Appendix D).
	• The Dean's Editor will review the manuscript and may send it back to the student through the DSEM process for changes.
	• Upon approval, you will receive a notice to complete the paperwork for submission to UMI Dissertation Publishing (ProQuest) and may request printing/binding of the manuscript. You may be contacted for additional information, payments, etc.
	• Following completion of all paperwork, the Registrar will be notified that all academic graduation requirements are complete.

Next Steps: Submit Petition to Graduate	Form required to trigger graduation audit and preparations for graduation.	May be submitted any time after submission to Final Dissertation Review	• Registrar • Chair

Notes:	• A **Petition to Graduate Form - Doctoral Programs** triggers an audit. Registrar starts an audit to make sure all forms have been received and credits recorded.
	• The petition also triggers preparations for participation in the Commencement Ceremony.
	• The Registrar will notify you as to what steps must be taken to officially graduate and walk in the next Commencement Ceremony.
	• Preparations for graduation may take up to two months.
	• In order to walk in the next Commencement Ceremony, you must have all the paperwork in by the date specified by the Registrar.
	• In order to walk in the Commencement Ceremony, you must have successfully completed your Final Oral Defense two weeks before the date of the Commencement Ceremony.

3.0 DISSERTATION COMPLETION GUIDE

3.1 RESEARCH TOPIC SELECTION

The first phase in the preparation of a dissertation is the careful selection of a research topic. The dissertation is the culminating research project in your doctoral program, and it should demonstrate your ability to conduct original research, including gathering data, analyzing results, and contributing substantively to an existing body of knowledge. It may include qualitative research, quantitative research, or a mixed-methods design (both qualitative and quantitative research).

The process of selecting a topic really begins as soon as you enroll in the doctoral program, if not before. As you proceed through your coursework, and attend your in-residence workshops, you should be thinking about what specific area of your field you are most interested in, what you plan to do in the future, and what outstanding questions you think should be answered. You will be working on your dissertation for at least a year, and it is important to be researching something that you are interested in and that you feel will be an important contribution to the field. Furthermore, you should remember that you will be associated with the topic of your dissertation during the early part of your professional career, if not longer.

Selecting a topic can be a daunting task, and you are strongly encouraged to meet with members of the faculty early on in your program to discuss possible topics. Keep the following in mind while you consider topics:

- Content
  - The topic should be related to your field of specialization, area of interest, and professional plans for the future.
  - A question or problem that you have identified on your own is more likely to keep your interest for a long time than a topic provided by someone else.
  - Consider the scope of the topic. Topics that are more narrowly defined are much easier to study thoroughly. You should not try to cover too large a content area.
  - Consider how comfortable and willing you will be to devote a substantial amount of time to the selected topic. Studying something you believe in strongly should give you sufficient motivation to complete the project.
  - Consider whether the questions of interest have been addressed in other research in similar or different forms and whether these questions are worthy of further study.
  - Ashford University does not have animal research facilities, and thus, animal research is not acceptable. ***Research involving animals as primary research subjects is not permitted.***

- Logistics
  - Be practical. Consider the amount of time and amount of resources necessary to undertake the research, including money, location, data collection instruments, etc.
  - Consider the availability of participants or data.
  - Once you have narrowed down your topic and considered the methodology, enumerate the tasks that need to be accomplished and the steps required to complete each task.

Estimate the time needed to complete each step, anticipate challenges and potential delays.

- Strategy
    - o Carefully read and review professional literature in your area of interest *before* making a final decision on the topic/area of research. Keep an annotated bibliography of everything you read so you can use it for reference and as part of the reference sections of your proposal and dissertation.
    - o It is also helpful to read other dissertations in your topic/area of research and discuss them with your Dissertation Chair or other faculty. High quality dissertations can be useful guides for the depth and breadth of a successful topic, as well as the methodology of the study.
    - o Review the requirements of the Dissertation Letter of Intent (LOI), discussed in Section 3.2. You will be working on your LOI in your Dissertation Planning (DP) I and DP II courses. Once you've selected your topic, complete the LOI. It is useful to start thinking about the importance of the study, the research methodology, and the specific question you want to answer with your research as you are selecting a topic.

A dissertation must be scholarly and succinct, and the research should be of sufficient quality to be published in part in a peer-reviewed journal. It should also make a significant contribution to the body of knowledge in your discipline/specialization, but it does not need to revolutionize the field.

Note that although you may begin choosing your topic before choosing your Chair, he or she will be instrumental in helping you focus the topic and developing the research methodology.

3.2 DISSERTATION LETTER OF INTENT (LOI)

You will begin in earnest to develop your Dissertation Letter of Intent (LOI) in your Dissertation Planning (DP) courses. By the time you have completed DP II, you will have an excellent draft of an LOI to then work on with your Dissertation Chair and Methodological Reader (MR). Once approved by your Chair and MR, you will submit it through the Dissertation Scholarship Editorial Manager (DSEM) for official documentation of approval.

The LOI consists of five sections: Problem Statement, Purpose Statement, Importance of the Study, Proposed Research Method, and Research Questions.

> Transition
> Point I

See **instructions and annotated examples** of the Letter of Intent in the Writing Center, Graduate Writing section.

PROBLEM STATEMENT
The problem statement should consist of 1-2 paragraphs that identify a general problem in the discipline that the proposed research will address. The problem statement should describe the research problem and should be supported by recent citations. It should briefly explain how the results of the proposed study could be used to address the research problem.

PURPOSE STATEMENT

The Purpose Statement should consist of 1 paragraph that provides a specific and accurate synopsis of the overall purpose of the study. It should succinctly describe the focus, methodology, population, and geographical location of the study. The Purpose Statement should be aligned directly to the specific research problem.

IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

This section should consist of 1-2 paragraphs that briefly describe the importance of the proposed research, including how the study represents a unique approach to the problem, how the results may contribute to theory and/or practice in the field, the implications of the research, and any knowledge gaps that the proposed research will help fill.

PROPOSED RESEARCH METHOD

This section should consist of 1-2 paragraphs that briefly describe the research methodology for the proposed study, including the research method and research design, population and sample, instrumentation, and data collection and analysis approaches.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES

This section should consist of a list of the specific research questions you plan to try to answer with the study, and any specific hypotheses (quantitative only) you plan to test. The proposed research method and design should be consistent with the questions and hypotheses.

3.3 THE DISSERTATION PROPOSAL

3.3.1 PURPOSE OF THE DISSERTATION PROPOSAL

In the Dissertation Proposal you will *propose* the study you would like to conduct. Therefore, it is important for the proposal to clearly present what the topic is, why it is important to study, and how it should be studied. The proposal consists of three chapters (or the equivalent): Introduction, Review of the Literature, and Method. You should work closely with your Dissertation Chair while writing these chapters. It may also be helpful for you to consult the other members of the Committee for additional expertise, as necessary. Your Methodological Reader (MR) should be especially helpful in writing your Method chapter. Note that you will eventually be revising these chapters slightly for use in your final dissertation. The following section describes each part of the proposal.

3.3.2 PARTS OF THE DISSERTATION PROPOSAL

The proposal consists of three chapters:

I.   Introduction
II.   Review of the Literature
III.   Method

For further details and a checklist of what to include in each chapter and section, as well as formatting requirements, please see **Appendix B** and **Appendix C.**

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the reader to the nature of the study by guiding the reader from the broad aspects of the topic to a more specific question or set of questions. Chapter I should include the content below, and should be approximately 15-25 pages long. (Note that you may use the subheadings below,

but you are not required to do so, as long as all content is included. You may, for example, want to combine sections.)

GENERAL STATEMENT
A general statement should explain what you propose to accomplish with the study, the significance of the study, and the implications of the study. A discussion of *selected* literature should be included here, but limited to the specific studies or articles needed to explain the purpose of or need for the study. This literature review should include only those references that provide the historical framework for the statement of the problem. (Chapter II will consist of a comprehensive review of the literature.)

> It is recommended that you actually start writing Chapter II before Chapter I, as it will help you obtain an understanding of the topic, previous research conducted, and how your research addresses a gap in the literature.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM
This section discusses the general research problem and then focuses in on the specific problem that you propose to address. You should explain how and why the focus of the study is important, the potential impact of the proposed research, and how you think the study will contribute to the field.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY
This section provides a synopsis of the overall purpose of the study, and should:
- Include a Purpose Statement that describes the focus, methodology, population, and geographical location of the study;
- Define the specific area of the research and the central concepts or ideas of the study;
- Justify the method of inquiry (i.e., qualitative, quantitative, or mixed); and
- Describe possible conclusions and implications of those conclusions.

IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY
This section should address the importance of the research, what the research is expected to contribute to theory or practice, and the possible implications of the research.

THEORETICAL (OR CONCEPTUAL) FRAMEWORK
This section is intended to give the reader an understanding of how the study you are proposing fits into a larger theoretical or conceptual framework, and how it fits in with other studies in the field. Include a brief summary of enough relevant research literature (historical, seminal, and current) to situate and justify the study based on its contribution to the existing body of research. You may need to refer to the more detailed discussions in the literature that you will include in Chapter II.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS (AND HYPOTHESES)
In this section, you will identify and discuss the research questions and sub-questions that you plan to address in the study. If your study is quantitative, you will also state and elaborate on the associated hypotheses that you plan to test. This section should include an explanation of

how the research questions connect to the goals of the study as described in the Purpose of the Study.

OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH DESIGN

Briefly describe the general methodology that you plan to use and explain why it is appropriate, referring to a more detailed discussion in Chapter III.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Define any technical terms or terms that have multiple meanings or specific connotations in your research field. Operationalize key variables or constructs by describing how these will be measured or conceptualized for this study.

ASSUMPTIONS AND LIMITATIONS

Assumptions are factors or statements that you will consider from the beginning to be valid. Include the assumptions that you will make in the study in this section, including both research assumptions and theoretical assumptions. Because it would be difficult to take all factors into consideration, there will naturally be certain limitations in doing the study. The major limiting factors in the study, which could possibly affect the results, should also be addressed in this section. If the limitations are considerable, provide an explanation of why you think the study should still be conducted, and what can be gained from the study in spite of the limitations.

SUMMARY

In this section you should summarize the key points of the study and provide an overview of information that will be presented in Chapters II and III.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Scholarship entails comprehensive understanding of the historical and current treatment of the pertinent topic, and Chapter II consists of a comprehensive review of the literature pertaining to the topic of study.

While completing your coursework and selecting your topic, you will have been reading, exploring, and thinking about what others have done in order to better understand the concepts and issues, and identify gaps in the research. In order to argue the legitimacy of the current study, you need to have a thorough understanding of what that study will add to the most current literature on the topic. You will need to critically analyze, synthesize, and integrate the literature such that the reader understands where the proposed study fits into the current debates and academic inquiries concerning the topic. Chapter II is thus a formal summary and analysis of the literature directly related to your particular study. It should consist of the following sections:

> Begin your literature review as soon as you begin your doctoral program. As you move through your coursework, keep an annotated bibliography of everything you come across that might be of use during your dissertation.

INTRODUCTION

The introduction should introduce the chapter and its purpose and should also restate the research topic and questions.

SEARCH STRATEGY

In this section, you will explain how you conducted your literature search (e.g., the databases and search terms you used) and what parameters you used to narrow down the search (e.g., publication dates and sources). It is essentially your methodology for library research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This is the main section of the chapter and should be organized in a rational way, with subheads as needed. The Literature Review should:

- Be comprehensive;
- Describe related problems, questions, methods, and conclusions;
- Cover the most important theories or research findings upon which your research problem and hypotheses are based;
- Cover both historic and recent research findings;
- Present research that supports and refutes the main theories or findings of relevance;
- Compare and contrast different theories and research results;
- Analyze, synthesize, and evaluate the research, not simply present or report it; and
- Consist primarily of scholarly, peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and book chapters.

SUMMARY

This section should summarize the key points of the relationship between your research questions and the literature. It should also summarize what you hope will be your study's contribution to the literature (how it fills the gaps). The summary should also provide a bridge to Chapter III by summarizing the literature-based arguments for choosing a particular methodology.

In general, Chapter II is 30-50 pages long, but the exact length will be determined by the amount of existing published research. The literature review needs to be comprehensive, and it should show an overwhelming breadth and scope of knowledge on the related research topics.

CHAPTER III: METHOD

In the Method chapter, you will discuss the research design and the specific procedures you plan to follow in conducting the study. The specifics of the content and organization of Chapter III differs slightly from study to study depending on whether the method of inquiry is qualitative, quantitative, or mixed. See **Appendix B** for a detailed Dissertation Checklist for each type of research study.

Include the following in Chapter III:

- An introduction that describes the purpose and organization of the chapter, and provides a brief overview of the method of inquiry (qualitative, quantitative, or mixed), the specific research design, and the rationale for using it to address your research questions;
- The methodology and justification for the methodology you plan to use;
- Research questions and corresponding hypotheses (where applicable) and how the methodology will help answer those questions;

- The type of data you plan to collect and your proposed method of data collection, including reference to an appendix that includes detailed protocol you will use when collecting the data (i.e., interview script), and justification for that protocol;
- A description of the participants in the study, both the sample and the population;
- Your proposed sampling method and sample size, and a justification for the method and size;
- A description of each step you will follow, in order, in conducting the research, from development of the research instrument(s) up to data analysis;
- A description of the survey, research, or testing instruments and data collection forms you will use while gathering data for the study, along with the rationale for using them in terms of their reliability, validity, and utility (Note that any instruments or forms – e.g., instructions to participants, informed consent forms, surveys, etc. – proposed for the study should be included in an Appendix of the proposal, and referred to in this chapter, unless the instrument or form is not available for reprinting.);
- How the data will be analyzed, and what statistical methods or other methods of analysis will be used;
- Potential threats to internal and external validity of the results from this study (quantitative) or issues of trustworthiness (qualitative); and
- How you plan to protect the confidentiality of subject data and avoid any other ethical issues.

> As you begin writing your proposal read the **IRB Handbook**, which will help make sure you are aware of the ethical and professional standards that should be considered in your study design as you are working on it.

3.4 PROPOSAL REVIEW

As you write your proposal, you will spend time revising it based on comments from your Dissertation Chair and the other members of your Committee. Take these comments seriously, and keep in mind that the proposal development is a collaborative process. Your

Transition Point II

Committee should offer constructive criticism to help improve the overall quality of the proposal, until the Committee decides that it is good enough to move to the Preliminary Oral Defense. Your Methodological Reader (MR) will review the proposal for academic rigor, quality, and appropriateness of the proposed research study, evaluating particularly the alignment of the research problem and questions with the research methodology and design.

When your Committee thinks that the proposal is ready, submit your Proposal, with a Turnitin report for the proposal, to Dissertation Scholarship Editorial Manager (DSEM) (Proposal Review) for documentation of approval.

As with comments from the Dissertation Committee, you are required to make any necessary changes and resubmit the proposal, along with a Change Matrix (See Appendix H) describing the changes you made, to DSEM if necessary.

The following is a template that should be used to create the Change Matrix that will be submitted back whenever changes must be made to the Dissertation Proposal, IRB Submission, or final Dissertation. (See also Appendix H for an example)

Avoid Plagiarism! You are required to submit a Turnitin report with your proposal and dissertation. You should check the proposal before submitting it to your Committee. It is easy to plagiarize unintentionally, but even unintentional plagiarism is against Ashford University policy and can result in disciplinary actions. For more information about the plagiarism policy and tips on avoiding it, see the *Academic Catalog*.

CHANGE MATRIX TEMPLATE:

Comment Identifier	Reviewer Comment	Page/Para. (Original Draft)	Changes Made and/or Comments	Page/Para. (New Draft)
Consecutively number the reviewer comments you are responding to.	*Copy the reviewer comment.*	*List the page and paragraph numbers where the comment was made.*	*Describe the changes that were made, and/or comments responding to questions or concerns.*	*List the page and paragraph numbers where the change(s) was made.*

Transition Point III

3.5 PRELIMINARY ORAL DEFENSE

Once your proposal has been approved by your Committee, you need to schedule your Preliminary Oral Defense. The purpose of the Preliminary Oral Defense is to give you feedback about areas of possible improvement to successfully complete the dissertation. It also serves to give you the necessary clearance to send the proposal to the Institutional Review Board (IRB), and then proceed with the research (after receiving IRB approval). You should consider this process consultative and collegial in nature, as the goal is to provide constructive criticism that will ultimately aid in your successful completion of the dissertation. Though the proposal is written with the help of the Dissertation Chair and Dissertation Committee, you must be able to present your own work. The formal presentation of the proposal is a tangible milestone for you in becoming a scholar with a voice of your own.

Most Oral Defenses will occur virtually, with your Chair and Committee on a telephone conference line or other synchronous communication medium (Skype, Zoom, etc.). You will create your presentation

slides using Microsoft PowerPoint and refer to your slides as you would if you were presenting at a conference.

3.5.1 BEFORE THE PRELIMINARY ORAL DEFENSE

- You can work on creating your Oral Defense PowerPoint slides while waiting for your Proposal feedback. Though it is unlikely that you will get a "No Pass" at the time of the Oral Defense, Oral Communication is a highly-regarded skill that all doctoral students should possess. You should create a PowerPoint presentation where the slides are informative but not too wordy. In order to present in your own words and voice, you should not expect to read directly from the slides or read from a prepared script. Be prepared to complete the presentation before questions and discussion commence.
- Coordinate with each Committee Member (including the Chair) to find a date and time for the Oral Defense. Oral defense conference calls are typically scheduled for 90 minutes, but may be scheduled for a timeframe determined by the Chair.

> ⚠️ **All of the student's Committee must be present at the Oral Defense except by exception granted by the Dean. The Methodological Reader may optionally attend.**

- You should communicate with your Chair as to the date/time agreed upon and whether a Telephone Conference Line is needed. The Oral Defense may take place by telephone, by Skype, by, Zoom, in person, or whatever way you and your Chair decide is appropriate. If a telephone line is needed (or a Campus venue reserved), a **Request for Oral Defense** form may be submitted by the Chair to obtain an Ashford University conference line (or Campus venue).
- You should remind your Committee a few days ahead of the scheduled date and send information of how to join the meeting. The PowerPoint presentation should also be sent to the Committee at that time.
- With your Chair's permission, you may invite others to observe your presentation.

3.5.2 DURING THE ORAL DEFENSE

The following may be used as a guide by the Chair in moderating students' oral defenses:

- Call the meeting to order.
- Make sure all Committee Members are present.
- Introduce the student and format for the defense.
- Allow student to present research summary:
  - o Present PowerPoints reflecting the proposal for the Preliminary Oral Defense (~15-30 minutes).
- Open the floor to questions.
- Excuse the student, informing him or her of when you will communicate the Committee's evaluation decision. It is recommended that this be done *immediately* after the decision is made.
- Discuss with the Committee Members any issues or concerns, as well as the evaluation of the student's oral defense with regards to "Pass, No Revisions," "Pass, Minor Revisions," or "No

Pass, Major Revisions Needed."

⚠️ **Note that a consensus of the Oral Defense evaluation result is required from the Chair and Committee Members.**

- Inform the student of the Committee's evaluation decision and the steps to take to obtain a "Pass," or to address minor revisions.

There is flexibility in how the deliberations and communication to the student are accomplished. Some circumstances will allow the student to remain with the Committee during deliberations, other circumstances may make the absence of the student preferable.

There is also flexibility in how the student is told of the results: Some Chairs have the student call back in (if absent during deliberations) to be told the results in front of the rest of the Committee and receive congratulations; Other Chairs will call the student separately. In any case, the student should be told as soon as possible about the result of the Defense.

3.5.3 AFTER THE PRELIMINARY ORAL DEFENSE

- You will be informed of the Committee's decision after the evaluation has been completed.
  - There are three possible outcomes: "Pass, No Revisions," "Pass, Minor Revisions," and "Major Revisions Needed."
  - If you "Pass, Minor Revisions," or receive "Major Revisions Needed," your Dissertation Chair will advise you of the revisions needed to proceed.
- Within 24 hours after the Oral Defense, your Chair should complete the **Oral Defense Evaluation**, marking the result of the Oral Defense and itemizing changes that are needed or recommended.
  - The **Oral Defense Evaluation** should be sent to you and all members of your Committee.
  - Chair should e-sign the **Oral Defense Evaluation** and send to dissertation.online@rockies.edu.
  - *Signatures of all Committee Members are no longer needed as consensus was obtained before the evaluation results were reached*.
- If you were evaluated as "No Pass, Major Revisions Needed," you must make the appropriate revisions and consult with your Chair and Committee Members. Once a consensus among the Committee is reached that you should Pass the Oral Defense transition point, your Chair should submit an updated **Oral Defense Evaluation** with the new evaluation rating.
- You will not be allowed to progress to the next transition point unless the **Oral Defense Evaluation** (with a Pass) is correctly submitted.

3.6 IRB REVIEW

After you have passed the Preliminary Oral Defense, you must have your proposal reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) before you begin collecting any data. The IRB will review the proposal to make sure the methods proposed follow ethical standards.

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Transition
Point IV

</div>

- Details of the IRB submission process are explained in the **IRB Handbook***; refer to it before requesting the IRB Review, even though you should have reviewed the **IRB Handbook** while writing the proposal.
- Submit the following to the IRB:
  - **Request for IRB Review**
  - **IRB Research Summary**
  - Certificate of CITI Completion (see **IRB Handbook** and section 3.6.1)

> ⚠️
>
> You **may NOT** begin collecting data until you have passed the Preliminary Oral Defense and your Dissertation Proposal has been approved by the IRB.

- If you require a Full Review, you may also need to make a presentation to the IRB.
- The IRB Review is not a review of your topic or your research methodology, it is a review of whether or not sufficient safeguards are included to protect human research participants*.
- The IRB meets regularly to review student applications.
  - Requests must be submitted by the 15th of the previous month for the most efficient consideration of Full Reviews*.
- **Expect the IRB approval process to take two to five weeks; plan accordingly**.
- Refer to the **IRB Handbook** for more details about submission to the IRB. After the review, you will receive a letter with the IRB's assessment. The IRB will:
  - Approve the proposal;
  - Approve the proposal with specific conditions; or
  - Deny the proposal with suggestions for major changes needed for protection of human research participants.
- If your proposal requires revisions, you may need to resubmit it to the IRB for another review. Refer to the **IRB Handbook** for instructions as to what to include with a resubmission.
- It is not uncommon for outside agencies to have something similar to an IRB that must also approve the study before any data can be collected. If you are working with an outside organization, be sure to submit the proposal and protocols for review to their administration.
- If your study is not completed within a year, you must submit an **IRB Request for Renewal**.
- If your study requires changes affecting risk/benefit ratio, including a significant change in study population or recruitment method, then you must submit an **IRB Report of Change**.
- Once data collection has ended, you must submit the **IRB Close-Out Form**.

3.6.1 COLLABORATIVE INSTITUTIONAL TRAINING INITIATIVE (CITI)

As the "principal investigator," you and all members of your Committee must have a current CITI certificate of completion of the modules assigned to University of the Rockies*. For first time users, go

to https://www.citiprogram.org and register using "University of the Rockies"* as the Organization Affiliation and you as a "Principal Investigator."

Once logged in, follow the directions for completing the coursework for your student profile.

After successful completion of all modules, CITI certification lasts for three years, after which the appropriate modules must be taken again to renew. CITI certification must be in effect through your data collection.

*University of the Rockies will remain the Organization Affiliation with CITI until early 2019.

3.7 CONDUCTING RESEARCH AND WRITING THE DISSERTATION

3.7.1 CONDUCTING RESEARCH

Upon passing the Preliminary Oral Defense and approval of the proposal by the Institutional Review Board (IRB), the study is ready to commence. ***You may begin data collection only at this point.*** You are advised to work closely with your Dissertation Chair throughout your research. You may also wish to consult other Committee Members as needed.

Follow these guidelines while conducting the study:

1. Collect all data as described in your proposal, adhering to ethical and professional standards throughout.
2. Conduct data analysis, consulting with your Dissertation Committee as needed.
3. Consult with external editors and statisticians in a mentoring or coaching capacity only.
4. Write Chapters IV (Results) and V (Discussion).
5. As you collect data, you are responsible for adhering to the method described in your proposal. If you find that you need to revise the method, you must inform your Dissertation Chair immediately. Depending on the nature of the modifications, you may need to revise your proposal and resubmit it to the IRB, and the equivalent organizations of any agency you are working with.
6. Use the appropriate consent or assent forms if the study involves human participants. ***Keep the original consent or assent forms signed by participants confidential and do not make them a part of any appendix of the dissertation.***

3.7.2 ORGANIZATION AND CONTENT

Writing a dissertation may seem like an overwhelming task, but it can be made more manageable by breaking it into smaller sections. Good organization throughout the writing process will facilitate this task greatly. Remember, the entire dissertation must be in APA style, following the *APA Publication Manual, 6th Edition,* except as specified in **Appendix C**.

It may be helpful to look at other dissertations. Dissertations are available to peruse via ProQuest in the "Interdisciplinary Dissertations and Theses" database.

Keep in mind that you have actually already written a large portion of the dissertation in preparing the proposal (Chapters I, II, and III). You will need to revisit those chapters and make revisions, as needed, when completing the final dissertation.

Organization of Final Dissertation

1. Title Page
2. Copyright notice
3. Abstract
4. Acknowledgements (optional)
5. Table of Contents
6. List of Tables and Figures
7. List of Appendices
8. Chapter I: Introduction
9. Chapter II: Review of the Literature
10. Chapter III: Method
11. Chapter IV: Results
12. Chapter V: Discussion
13. References
14. Appendices
15. Biographical Statement (optional)

Dissertations follow a very specific layout, and typically include similar types of content. The dissertation consists of five chapters, plus front matter and back matter. These are described in more detail below. For further details, consult **Appendix B** and **Appendix C**.

FRONT MATTER

> See **Appendix D** for a template and example of what should be included on the Title Page.
> See the Writing Center, Graduate Writing Section, for Formatting examples and **Annotated Dissertation Chapters**, including "**Tips for Getting Final Approval**"

TITLE PAGE

The title page should include the title of the dissertation, your name, the date, the name and credentials of the Chair and Committee Members, along with other statements, and be formatted according to the template in Appendix D.

COPYRIGHT PAGE

In order to copyright your work (which must be done within 5 years of publication), a statement of copyright must be included on a separate page (preliminary page ii) directly following the title page. You should have your work copyrighted, especially if you intend to publish any part of it at a later date. (This can be done by UMI Dissertation Publishing after you submit the final manuscript.)

ABSTRACT

The body of the finished dissertation begins with a brief (1 page or less) abstract (or summary) of the research conducted and the results obtained. This section should be headed with the

word "Abstract," centered, at the top of the page. Keep in mind that a reader should come away from the abstract knowing your research topic, questions, sample, methodology and design, overall results, and your conclusions. An abstract is a summary of the actual points in the dissertation. The abstract should:

- State the problem briefly.
- Describe the methods and procedures used in gathering or studying the problem.
- Give a condensed summary of the findings of the study.
- Include a list of key words to be used by other researchers to search for and identify information in various subject areas.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In this section, you will give appropriate recognition to those individuals and organizations that have made some significant contribution to the research or project. While this is an optional component, it is customary to include.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

The Table of Contents should include the Chapter Titles, Headings, and Sub-headings, along with the page number where each begins.

> Use the Table of Contents tool in Microsoft Word. This tool helps you automatically create and update the Table of Contents.

LIST OF TABLES AND LIST OF FIGURES

The List of Tables and List of Figures are lists of the titles and page numbers of graphics, including illustrations, diagrams, graphs, charts, and tables. Tables and figures should be listed in order and the titles should be descriptive.

LIST OF APPENDICES

On this page is a list of the titles and page numbers of all appendices. Appendices, which are labeled such as "Appendix A: Title of Appendix," should be listed in order of references to them in the text and the titles should be descriptive.

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

This chapter is simply a revision or extension of Chapter I of the proposal. Keep in mind that you will need to revise the proposal chapter such that it refers not to what you proposed to do, but what you actually did do.

Chapter II: Review of the Literature

This chapter is likely to be a light revision of Chapter II of the proposal. It should include the literature review of the proposal, along with a review of any additional literature that you came across or that was published while you were conducting your dissertation research. As in the proposal, Chapter II should be a formal summary and analysis of the literature.

> Chapters I, II, and III should be revised based on what was in the Dissertation Proposal. Make sure the language focuses on what was done, not what you plan to do, and is in the **past tense**.

CHAPTER III: METHOD

In the method chapter, you will discuss the overall research design and the specific procedures you followed while conducting the study. Again, this is a modification of Chapter III of the proposal, and you can use it as a base. Be sure to revise it according to what was actually done during the study, not what you propose to do, updating.

CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

The Results chapter focuses on the data gathered and data analysis you conducted for the study. Like Chapter III, the exact content and organization of the chapter will depend on the type and details of the study you conducted. Please see **Appendix B** for more details.

Unlike the first three chapters, Chapter IV will be completely new. Chapter IV should include the following (note that these are not subheadings, but are descriptions of the content of the chapter):

> The Results chapter should include processed data and statistical analyses only. It should **NOT** include raw data or interpretation of the data or analyses. Leave interpretation and conclusions to the Discussion chapter.

- An introduction that describes the purpose and organization of the chapter, and restates the research questions;
- A discussion of any pilot studies, results, and resulting modifications to the main study;
- A detailed overview of the sample (i.e., demographics);
- A discussion of the theory/theoretical model in detail, if the dissertation is theoretical in nature;
- A discussion of all available data, the statistical methods used, significance levels (if relevant), and whether or not the hypotheses were supported by the data, if the study was quantitative or mixed; or a discussion of resulting themes with quotations as evidence, if the study was qualitative;
- The results of the analyses;
- The inconsistencies and contradictions in the findings;

- Any graphic or visual representation of data gained from the study, such as data tables, scatterplots, ANOVA tables, or process diagrams, following APA requirements for formatting and inclusion; and
- An explanation of any graphics in the body of the chapter so it is clear as to why they are included and what information they provide to the reader.

With the exception of qualitative studies, this chapter is relatively straight-forward and technical for most dissertations. Just give the facts without interpretation.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

In this chapter, you will interpret the results and discuss the implications of the results from Chapter IV, and how they relate to your field and/or subfield. Chapter V is generally around 15-25 pages and should include the following:

- An introduction that describes the purpose and organization of the chapter;
- Interpretations of the data and analyses;
- References to results reported in Chapter IV;
- Conclusions that address the research questions;
- Discussion of findings that *do not* fully support the hypotheses;
- Limitations affecting the validity, generalizability, or trustworthiness of the study;
- Implications for theory and future research;
- Implications for practice;
- How your findings converge with or diverge from previous research;
- Recommendations for further research; and
- A strong conclusion statement.

BACK MATTER

The end of your dissertation should include the following sections:

REFERENCES

List *all* references cited in the dissertation alphabetically, using APA Style for listing references. *Do not* list any references that were not actually cited in the dissertation.

APPENDIX (OR APPENDICES)

Include all additional information or materials that support but are not a part of the text in Chapters I-V. Examples include:

- Copies of instructions for participants;
- Copies of consent forms;
- Permissions obtained from organizations or agencies to use resources, materials, or facilities;
- Descriptions of any special conditions of the research; and
- Additional tables or graphs that supplement but do not provide data gained from the study.

BIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT (OPTIONAL)

You may wish to include a brief statement about yourself: your educational background, reasons for choosing the particular field you are in, and special interest in the topic of study.

3.7.3 WRITING SUGGESTIONS

As you write, keep in mind that your work will be judged by not only the quality and rigor of your research, but also according to your writing style. Regardless of the merit of the research and conclusions, readers tend to come away with a favorable impression of a professional, well-written dissertation and an unfavorable impression from a sloppy or casually-written dissertation. Here are a few tips to keep in mind throughout the writing process:

> See **Appendix F** for more tips on writing a dissertation.

- Use Microsoft Word tools to organize and format the dissertation.
- Save the document in at least two places (e.g., thumb/flash drive, hard drive, paper copy, etc.). This will prevent data loss in the case of technical difficulties. Consider saving the dissertation in the cloud, an internet accessible site (Carbonite, Dropbox, etc.), as well.
- Stay organized. Keep all materials and references handy. Use a user-friendly filing system, such as separating reference materials by subtopic or the chapter in which they are used.
- Utilize bibliographical software (RefWorks, EndNote, etc.) to keep track of your references and assist in formatting your citations and reference list.
- Come up with a logical file naming and folder system. Create a system that allows you to keep old versions of files, but minimizes version control problems.
- Read and follow the most current edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*.
- Prepare an outline. It is easier to put words together when following a detailed outline.
- Aim for a concise and continuous flow of ideas. Use headings to organize and clarify the structure of the document.
- Update the References list as you write instead of completing the entire list at one time.
- Read over everything you write and everything you revise before sending it to anyone to review. Your reviewers should be making constructive comments, not commenting on careless mistakes.
- Expect to write several drafts. Most students revise the dissertation several times before it is approved by the Dissertation Chair and ready to submit to the Committee Members for review.
- Ask an outside person to read the document and make editing suggestions regarding grammar, spelling, and syntax. It is acceptable to use a professional editing service for this purpose, but you are responsible for all related fees.
- Give the Dissertation Chair a draft of each chapter as it is completed. This helps the Chair review the work and allows you to receive faster feedback.

> ⚠️
>
> **It is your responsibility to obtain letters of permission from copyright holders to reproduce copyrighted material (e.g., published tables, graphs, measurements) in your dissertation, and to submit copies of approvals to UMI/ProQuest when submitting your dissertation for publication. In addition, reproduced (or adapted) tables or figures must be accompanied by a note at the bottom of the reprinted table (or in the figure caption), giving credit to the original author and to the copyright holder.**

3.8 DISSERTATION REVIEW

Once you have written your dissertation, it will need to be reviewed by your Dissertation Committee including your Methodological Reader (MR). Once approved, you will then go on to present and defend the dissertation.

Your dissertation will need to go through a number of drafts before your Chair and Committee will approve it.

Transition Point V

- When you finish writing your dissertation and have reviewed and revised it on your own with the help of your Dissertation Chair and MR, submit it to your Committee Members for review. Expect several rounds of revisions.

- When your Committee thinks that the proposal is ready, submit your Proposal, with a Turnitin report for the proposal, to the Dissertation Scholarship Editorial Manager (DSEM) (Proposal Review) for documentation of approval.

Note: If your full dissertation is not approved, it will be sent back. You are expected to address reviewer comments, complete a Change Matrix indicating all the changes you made, and have your Dissertation Chair and Committee sign off on the new submission.

As with comments from the Dissertation Committee, you are required to make any necessary changes and resubmit the proposal, along with a Change Matrix (Appendix H) describing the changes you made, to DSEM if necessary.

The following is a template that should be used to create the Change Matrix that will be submitted back whenever changes must be made to the Dissertation Proposal, IRB Submission, or final Dissertation. (See also Appendix H for an example)

CHANGE MATRIX TEMPLATE:

Comment Identifier	Reviewer Comment	Page/Para. (Original Draft)	Changes Made and/or Comments	Page/Para. (New Draft)
Consecutively number the reviewer comments you	*Copy the reviewer comment.*	*List the page and paragraph numbers*	*Describe the changes that were made, and/or comments*	*List the page and paragraph numbers where the*

are responding to.		where the comment was made.	responding to questions or concerns.	change(s) was made.

3.9 FINAL ORAL DEFENSE

Once your dissertation is approved by the Dissertation Chair, Dissertation Committee, and your Methodological Reader (MR), you are ready to defend it formally in an oral presentation to the Committee.

> Transition Point VI

The Final Oral Defense is intended to make sure that you have conducted an academically acceptable dissertation and can communicate your knowledge of the dissertation's research topics and findings to others.

Goals of the Final Oral Defense

- Gauge your knowledge of the area studied;
- Serve as a definitive demonstration of your knowledge, skills, research abilities, and sense of practical applicability and contribution to the field of study;
- Answer/address all questions proposed in the study;
- Test your ability to make an oral presentation and respond sufficiently to questions in a public forum;
- Provide a medium through which the University community can be made aware of the study undertaken; and
- Serve as a forum for members of the Dissertation Committee, as well as the academic community at large, to provide input into the study.

Most Oral Defenses will occur virtually, with your Chair and Committee (Methodological Reader may optionally attend) on a telephone conference line or other synchronous communication medium (Skype, Zoom, etc.). You will create your presentation slides using Microsoft PowerPoint and refer to your slides as you would if you were presenting at a conference.

3.9.1 BEFORE THE FINAL ORAL DEFENSE

- You can work on creating your Oral Defense PowerPoint slides while waiting for your Dissertation feedback. Though it is unlikely that you will get a "No Pass" at the time of the Oral Defense, Oral Communication is a highly-regarded skill that all doctoral students should possess. You should create a PowerPoint presentation where the slides are informative but not too wordy. In order to present in your own words and voice, you should not expect to read directly from the slides or read from a prepared script. Be prepared to complete the presentation before questions and discussion commence.

- Coordinate with each Committee Member (including the Chair) to find a date and time for the Oral Defense. Oral defense conference calls are typically scheduled for 90 minutes, but may be scheduled for a timeframe determined by the Chair.

> ⚠️ **All of the student's Committee must be present at the Oral Defense except by exception granted by the Dean. Methodological Reader may optionally attend.**

- You should communicate with your Chair as to the date/time agreed upon and whether a Telephone Conference Line is needed. The Oral Defense may take place by telephone, by Skype, by, Zoom, in person, or whatever way you and your Chair decide is appropriate. If a telephone line is needed (or a Campus venue reserved), a **Request for Oral Defense** form may be submitted by the Chair to obtain an Ashford University conference line (or Campus venue).
- You should remind your Committee a few days ahead of the scheduled date and send information of how to join the meeting. The PowerPoint presentation should also be sent to the Committee at that time.
- With your Chair's permission, you may invite others to observe your presentation.

3.9.2 DURING THE FINAL ORAL DEFENSE

The following activities usually occur during the Final Oral Defense:

1. Dissertation Committee Chair serves as the moderator.
2. Give a 30-45 minute presentation summarizing the study and respond to questions from the audience, if present.
3. After presentation, you meet with the Dissertation Committee for a question-and-answer session wherein Committee Members may question any aspect related to the results, your interpretation of the results, or implications of the study.
4. You are excused and Committee Members will convene to evaluate your defense.
5. After they have convened, which is typically within the hour following the defense, you will be informed of the Committee's decision. The Committee may direct you to revise, expand, or delete portions of the dissertation and will give you details of the requested information or changes. A result of "Major Revisions Needed" will require that you repeat the final oral defense.

   Note: Ashford University retains the right to consider the Final Oral Defense a "Fail" if you do not make the changes required by the Committee or are found to have committed any scientific, ethical, or professional misconduct in the study.

3.9.3 AFTER THE FINAL ORAL DEFENSE

- You will be informed of the Committee's decision after the evaluation has been completed.
  - There are three possible outcomes: "Pass, No Revisions," "Pass, Minor Revisions," and "Major Revisions Needed."
  - If you "Pass, Minor Revisions," or receive "Major Revisions Needed," your Dissertation Chair will advise you of the revisions needed to proceed.

- Within 24 hours after the Oral Defense, you should submit your PowerPoint presentation to the Dissertation Scholarship Editorial Manager (DSEM) under the heading "Final Oral Defense."
- Your Chair will get an email asking to approve in DSEM, marking the result of the Oral Defense and itemizing changes that are needed or recommended.
- If your presentation was evaluated as "No Pass, Major Revisions Needed," you will need to make the appropriate revisions and consult with the Committee Members. Once a consensus among the Committee is reached that you should Pass the Oral Defense transition point, submit to DSEM again.
- Once you have passed your Final Oral Defense, you may proceed to the final transition point.

3.10 FINAL MANUSCRIPT / DEAN'S REVIEW

After you pass the Final Oral Defense, you are ready to prepare your dissertation for final submission.

The final transition point is the Final Manuscript Review, which ensures that the manuscript meets University requirements. This review occurs after the Final Oral Defense and should be a fully formatted manuscript that has been edited by you or an APA Editor. (See Section 4.0 and Appendix C for resources you may consult to properly format your manuscript.)

> **Transition Point VII**

⚠️ **A list of editors familiar with Ashford University formatting style guide may be obtained from your Dissertation Specialist (DS). These editors may be contracted and paid to do formatting editing.**

The APA Editor signs the **Certification of APA Style Compliance**, which should be submitted by the student through the Dissertation Scholarship Editorial Manager (DSEM) along with the final manuscript. The Dean's editor reviews the manuscript for adherence to Ashford University and APA style guidelines.

⚠️ **Note that the manuscript should include a University approved title page signed by the Chair.**

Once the formatting of the manuscript is approved, the Dean, or designate, may also review the final product one last time.

You do not have to be enrolled in a term when the manuscript is initially submitted for Final Manuscript Review, and after that. Resubmissions, if necessary, for Final Manuscript Review may be done while you are out of class.

Once the Final Manuscript is Approved, the DS will contact the student to complete the necessary paperwork, and possible payment, for submission to UMI Dissertation Publishing (ProQuest) and requests for printing/binding of the manuscript.

> ⚠️
>
> **In order to complete this final review process during any given 9-week academic term, you should plan to have your final dissertation draft approved by your entire Committee no later than the end of the second week of the term. That allows another seven weeks in that term to complete the process. This is imperative if you plan to walk during the current year Commencement Ceremony. Note: This process could take longer.**

3.11 FINAL STEPS TO GRADUATION

⚠️ As you near completion of your Dissertation you should stay in close contact with your Dissertation Specialist (DS). The timing of last steps toward graduation can be coordinated by the DS.

3.11.1 BINDING AND PUBLISHING THE DISSERTATION

Once the dissertation has been completed and Approved at Final Manuscript Review, you will receive instructions for publishing to UMI Publishing (ProQuest). Your graduation fee pays for the printed copy that the university keeps, however, you have the option of paying for, and receiving printed copies.

The instructions you receive will explain how to obtain copies for yourself and how to file for a copyright for an additional fee.

3.11.2 PETITION TO GRADUATE

The **Petition to Graduate Form - Doctoral Programs** is a form obtained from the Registrar or through your Dissertation Specialist (DS). The signed Petition to Graduate triggers an audit by the Registrar's Office to make sure all transition points have been completed, all forms have been received, and required credits recorded. The petition also triggers preparations for participation in the Commencement Ceremony.

The Petition to Graduate must be signed by the Chair, but **no earlier** than when you submit your full dissertation to Final Review (before Final Oral Defense). At that time, you are far enough along to reasonably expect completion in the next few months. The Registrar's deadline for submission of the Petition to Graduate is a few months before the Commencement Ceremony. Students may not walk in the Commencement Ceremony before successfully completing Final Oral Defense, so submitting a signed petition is not a guarantee that you will be allowed to walk at Commencement.

3.11.3 GRADUATION AND COMMENCEMENT CEREMONY

You should stay in touch with your Dissertation Specialist (DS) to make sure everything is complete for Graduation and for attending the Commencement Ceremony. Graduation will be conferred according to requirements by the Registrar's Office. Students may attend the Commencement Ceremony before or after graduation is conferred, but may not walk in Commencement before successfully completing Final Oral Defense.

4.0 ASHFORD UNIVERSITY RESOURCES

LIBRARY

The Library will be a necessary resource as you conduct a literature search for previously published articles on your topic and chosen methodology. University Librarians may be useful if you are having difficulty finding a particular article or locating research on a particular topic. In addition, you may access former students' (Ashford/Rockies or other universities) dissertations and reports via the ProQuest "Interdisciplinary dissertation and Theses" database. Access the Library via the Student Portal.

RESEARCH RESOURCE CENTER

The **Research Resource Center (RRC)**, formerly known as the Rockies Research Center, is an online resource with information to assist Doctoral students with applied research, links to additional outside resources, an open forum for discussions and sharing information related to research, and a place to ask questions about the research processes. The RRC also provides information on research methodologies, including qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods, and includes a link to SAGE Research Methods Online. The forms required for the Dissertation Process can also be found via the RRC, which can be accessed via the Student Portal.

SAGE RESEARCH METHODS

SAGE Research Methods is a collection of resources to help in the understanding and utilization of various research designs and methodologies, including ethics, implementation, data collection, and data analysis. SAGE resources are available to faculty and students, and include the following:

- Books (e.g., textbooks, "Little Green Book", and "Little Blue Book" series)
- Dictionaries, encyclopedias, and handbooks
- Journal articles
- Videos
- Methodspace (discussion forum)

To access SAGE Research Methods, go to the Library. Click on the **Find Articles & More** link on the main menu. Click on **Databases A-Z**. Jump to the **S** listings by clicking on the letter. Then click on **SAGE Research Methods**.

SMARTLAB STATISTICS PRIMER

SMARTLab is designed to give students a refresher on basic statistics. It includes straight-forward explanations and practice of statistical methods in a real-world context. This may serve as a refresher before embarking in the statistical analyses for your study. Access SMARTLab via the Student Portal.

WRITING CENTER

The **Writing Center** may be a useful resource to improve your writing skills as you complete your coursework, but also for writing your dissertation. The Writing Center will review one chapter at a time, giving detailed feedback on the writing, general organization, and grammar

for that chapter (not content or formatting). Access the Writing Center via the Student Portal or through your Canvas classrooms.

Important resources specifically for dissertations in the **Writing Center**, Graduate Writing Section, include:
- o   Writing a Dissertation
- o   Dissertation Checklist
- o   Letter of Intent instructions and samples
- o   IRB submission examples
- o   Tips for Getting Final Approval (Formatting Guidelines)
- o   Annotated Dissertation chapters for Qualitative and Quantitative Dissertations
- o   Guides to writing a Literature Review, Problem Statement, Abstract
- o   Resources to write at a graduate-level

APPENDIX A: DISSERTATION FORMS AND DISSERTATION SCHOLARSHIP EDITORIAL MANAGER (DSEM) SUBMISSIONS

Submission	Deliverable	Must be Approved by*	Method of Submission/Approval
Chair Request	Form: **Chair Request**	• Chair • Lead Research Faculty	Submission of **Chair Request** form through DSEM
Letter of Intent	LOI	• Chair • Methodological Reader	Submission/Approval through DSEM (LOI)
Proposal Review	Chapters I-III	• Chair • Committee Member • Methodological Reader	Submission/Approval through DSEM (Proposal Research Review)
Preliminary Oral Defense	Form: **Oral Defense Evaluation**	• Chair • Committee Member • Methodological Reader (optional)	**Oral Defense Evaluation** Form, signed by chair, sent to dissertation.online@rockies.edu
IRB Review	**Request for IRB Review**, **IRB Research Summary**, & attachments from **IRB Handbook**	• Chair • Institutional Review Board (IRB)	Signed by Chair; approved by IRB (see **IRB Handbook** for submission details)
Data collection complete	Form: **IRB Close-Out Form**	• Student • Chair	Submit to IRB@rockies.edu
Final Review	Chapters I - V	• Chair • Committee Member • Methodological Reader	Submission/Approval through DSEM (Final Research Review)
Final Oral Defense	PowerPoint Presentation	• Chair • Committee Member • Methodological Reader (optional)	Evaluation approved by Chair through DSEM (Final Oral Defense)
Final Manuscript Review/Dean's Review	Signed final manuscript; **Certification**	• APA Editor (signed form) • Dean's Editor • Dean	Submission/Approval through DSEM (Final Manuscript Submission);

	of APA Style Compliance		
Petition to Graduate	**Petition to Graduate Form - Doctoral Programs**	• Student • Chair • (required for approval to graduate and for attending Commencement Ceremony)	Email form to student.records@rockies.edu
When you are ready to schedule your Preliminary or Final Oral Defense (optional)	**Request for Oral Defense**	• Dissertation Specialist	Email form to dissertation.online@rockies.edu
As needed to change a Chair or Committee Member (optional)	**Request to Change Chairperson or Committee Member**	• Student • Old Chair • New Chair	Email signed form to dissertation.online@rockies.edu

APPENDIX B: DISSERTATION CHECKLIST

Use this checklist to ensure that all aspects of the Proposal, and later, the Dissertation, are sufficiently addressed.

DISSERTATION TEMPLATE

_____ Uses the Ashford University Dissertation Template for all drafts of the Proposal and Dissertation, including (in order):

     _____ Title Page
     _____ Copyright notice
     _____ Abstract
     _____ Acknowledgments (optional)
     _____ Table of Contents
     _____ List of Tables and Figures
     _____ List of Appendices
     _____ Chapter I: Introduction
     _____ Chapter II: Review of the Literature
     _____ Chapter III: Method
     _____ Chapter IV: Results
     _____ Chapter V: Discussion
     _____ References
     _____ Appendices
     _____ Biographical Statement (optional)

_____ Begins each chapter on a new page, headed with the word "Chapter" followed by the chapter number and title of the chapter.

GENERAL WRITING GUIDELINES

_____ Proposal and dissertation drafts must be in full compliance with APA formatting.

     _____ A person acting as the APA Style editor must review and verify review of the final dissertation draft prior to its submission.

_____ Proposal/dissertation follows a standard form and has a professional, scholarly appearance.

     _____ Use correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling according to chapters III and IV in *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.) [also see Chapter 9 of this document].

     _____ Include citations for direct quotations, paraphrasing, facts, and references to research studies.

     _____ Use secondary sources sparingly.

     _____ Include all in-text citations in the reference list.

_____ Write the proposal in future tense; Write the dissertation in past tense.

_____ Proposal/dissertation is written clearly in scholarly language.

　　_____ Writing is clear, precise, and avoids redundancy.

　　_____ Statements are specific, and topic sentences are established for paragraphs.

　　_____ Flow of language is smooth and clear.

　　_____ Ideas transition smoothly.

_____ Proposal/dissertation is organized logically and comprehensively.

　　_____ Chapters add up to an integrated "whole."

　　_____ Subheadings identify the logic and movement of the dissertation.

　　_____ Transitions between chapters are smooth and coherent.

_____ Tables and Figures

　　_____ Use APA formatting (Chapter 5 in the _Publication Manual of the American Psychological_

　　　　Association, 6th edition), except for specifications in Appendix C;

　　_____ Contain (or illustrate) content that is informative, relevant, and concise;

　　_____ Are placed in context with narrative text;

　　_____ Have long tables that are included in an appendix;

　　_____ Include unique titles that are brief but clear and explanatory;

　　_____ Have figure numbers and titles that are placed **_below the actual figure_**;

　　_____ Have table numbers and titles that are placed **_above the actual table_**; and

　　_____ Show copyright permission for any non-original content (if not in the public domain).

TITLE PAGE

_____ Title of the dissertation: centered, all caps, single-spaced

_____ Name of student

_____ Date

_____ Name of Dissertation Chair, including degree

_____ Names of Committee Members, including degrees

_____ Required Text: See Appendix D

ABSTRACT

_____ Consists of one double-spaced page or less.

_____ Includes a concise description of the study, a brief statement of the problem, statement of

　　purpose or importance, and a brief summary of methods and procedures.

_____ Includes a summary of sample size, findings, and implications.

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_____ Foreshadows the hypotheses to be tested or the questions to be raised as well as the importance

of the study.

_____ Clearly identifies and defines the central concepts or ideas of the study.

_____ Identifies the unit of analysis in the study.

_____ Justifies the general method of inquiry used in the study: qualitative, quantitative, or

mixed method.

For a quantitative study:

_____ Specifies at least two variables and a conjectured relationship between them to describe

what will be studied.

For a qualitative study:

_____ Identifies the phenomenon, situation, or factors of interest.

_____ Indicates and justifies which qualitative methodology will be used.

For a mixed methods study:

_____ Identifies the specific type of mixed method design--explanatory, exploratory, or

triangulation.

_____ Reflects whether the qualitative and quantitative phases of the study are sequential or

simultaneous.

IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

_____ Answers the following in a logical, explicit manner:

_____ What is the importance of this research?

_____ What will it contribute to theory and practice in the student's field of specialization?

_____ What are implications of the research?

THEORETICAL [OR CONCEPTUAL] FRAMEWORK

_____ Places the study within a particular theoretical area in the field under investigation.

_____ Situates the study among other research studies within the theoretical area.

_____ Briefly summarizes enough relevant research literature (historical, seminal, and current) to

situate and justify the study based on its contribution to the existing body of research,

referencing the more detailed discussions in Chapter II.

_____ Articulates the theoretical base (quantitative only) or the conceptual framework (qualitative only) to show connection to a certain body of literature. (Mixed method--addresses both theoretical and conceptual framework.)

RESEARCH QUESTIONS [AND HYPOTHESES]

_____ Clearly presents specific research questions and sub-questions to be addressed, referencing the more detailed discussions in Chapter III.

_____ Includes research hypotheses for each research question and sub-question (quantitative only).

_____ Includes research questions that are identified for the qualitative and quantitative phases (mixed method only).

_____ Questions and hypotheses are elaborated on in a discussion format, not simply listed.

_____ Connects the research questions to the **Statement of Purpose**, showing how these questions will address the goals of the study.

OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH DESIGN

_____ Briefly describes the general methodology and design, including data collection method, population and sample, instrumentation, data collection, and analysis, with references to more detailed discussions in Chapter III.

_____ Shows how the particular research design is the most appropriate to address the goals of the study.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

_____ Defines important terms as used in this study, especially those that may otherwise have multiple meanings.

_____ Uses citations to support the origin of the definitions.

_____ Defines important technical terms that may be unknown to a reader.

_____ Operationalizes key variables or constructs.

ASSUMPTIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND DELIMITATIONS

_____ Describes the scope and bounds of the study (delimitations--boundaries researcher has set).

_____ Addresses major limiting factors in the study that could possibly affect the results. (If limitations are considerable, explains why the study is being conducted.)

_____ Articulates assumptions about facts that are not actually verified.

_____ Addresses potential weaknesses of the study.

_____ Discusses generalizability of the study findings.

SUMMARY

_____ Summarizes key points of the study.

_____ Gives an overview of the content of the remaining chapters in the study, bridging to Chapter II.

_____ Conforms to the recommended length of 15–25 pages for Chapter I.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Scholarship entails comprehensive understanding of at least one academic community's historical and current treatment of the pertinent topic. In order to argue the legitimacy of the current study, a thorough understanding of what that study will add to the most current literature on the topic is necessary. Literature will be critically analyzed, synthesized, and integrated to produce a story that brings the reader along to understand where the study fits into the current debates and academic edges concerning the topic. Existing and historically seminal literature will provide a contextual framework within which the research design is situated. Additionally, a part of the literature review will provide an academic foundation for the methods and research design chosen. This chapter should be written in past tense.

INTRODUCTION

_____ Begins with the purpose of the chapter, how it fits in the dissertation, and the organization of the chapter.

_____ Frames the review by restating the topic and research questions.

SEARCH STRATEGY

_____ Describes the strategy used to collect relevant literature.

　　_____ Indicates which search engines were used.

　　_____ Lists which search terms were used.

_____ Indicates strategy for identifying historically seminal (classic) studies and theorists' writings.

_____ Justifies most appropriate time interval for current sources (last 2–3 years? Last 5 years?).

_____ If applicable, explains the lack of currency of the most recent publications.

_____ Reviews strategy for focusing in on empirical research that most closely resembles the current study.

[REVIEW OF RELATED RESEARCH AND LITERATURE]

(The rest of the literature review should include logical headings that aid the reader in understanding the content and organization of the chapter. The actual headings will differ for each student's work.)

_____ The review is an integrated, critical analysis and synthesis of the relevant research and other scholarly literature published on the topic.

　　_____ Includes the most current scholarship and important historical theory and research, when appropriate, to situate the topic.

　　_____ Synthesizes prior research to illustrate what is currently known about the research problem.

　　_____ Compares and contrasts different theories and research results.

_____ Evaluates previous research and related theory.

_____ Integrates various studies and theories to relate a story of the historical and current state

of knowledge on the topic.

_____ Addresses how the proposed research fits in the context of research to date.

_____ Draws mostly from published journal articles in peer-reviewed journals or sound academic books

containing primary material; provides justification for using other sources.

_____ Has a specific organization for the review. For example, organizes the review around major ideas

or themes or organizes the review historically.

_____ The literature review needs to be _comprehensive_, covering the most important theories or

research findings upon which the research problem (and hypotheses) was based.

_____ Relates the study to previous research.

_____ Identifies how the study will extend current knowledge.

_____ Defines the most important aspects of the theory that will be examined or tested (for

quantitative studies).

_____ Substantiates the conceptual framework for the study (for qualitative studies).

_____ Clearly relates the review of the related research and literature to the **Statement of Problem** as

expressed in the:

_____ research questions

_____ hypotheses (quantitative)

_____ population

_____ context/setting

_____ Includes a discussion of differing and common methodologies previously used to study the

research problem, including their strengths and limitations.

_____ Includes a literature-based description of the research variables (quantitative studies) or central

phenomenon, situation, or factors of interest (qualitative studies).

_____ Includes literature pertaining to the population and context or setting.

_____ Reviews literature related to research method and research design, including major and

foundational sources in that design and its application to the research problem.

SUMMARY

_____ Summarizes key points of the relationship between the study's research question(s) and the

literature.

_____ Summarizes the study's contribution to the literature.

_____ Bridges to Chapter III by summarizing literature-based arguments for choosing a particular

methodology.

_____ Conforms to the recommended length of 30–50 pages for Chapter II.

CHAPTER III: METHOD

The method chapter discusses the procedures to be followed in conducting the study (in the final draft, the methods that were followed) and the overall research design. The content and format of Chapter III will vary depending on whether the study is a qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods study. This chapter should be written in future tense for the proposal, in past tense for the dissertation.

INTRODUCTION

_____ Begins with the purpose of the chapter, how it fits in the dissertation, and the organization of the chapter.

_____ Describes the method of inquiry used (e.g., quantitative, qualitative, mixed method, meta-analysis, program evaluation, etc.).

_____ Describes the specific research methodology chosen and how it derives logically from the **Statement of Problem** and the research questions.

[QUALITATIVE]

METHODOLOGY SELECTED

_____ Describes which qualitative methodology will be used.

     _____ Justifies choice of methodology using major and foundational sources.

     _____ Explains why other possible choices would be less effective.

_____ Describes specific research questions and sub-questions (where appropriate) that are:

     _____ Clear and succinct

     _____ Congruent with the **Statement of Problem**

     _____ Answerable

     _____ Few in number

     _____ Clearly stated

     _____ Open-ended (*not* yes/no questions)

_____ Describes the role of the researcher in the data collection procedure.

     _____ Addresses the potential impact and minimization of researcher bias through methodological approaches.

STUDY PARTICIPANTS

_____ Describes and justifies the context (including site) for the study.

_____Clearly defines both the general study population and the specific population.

_____ Demonstrates (and documents) the ability to access the population.

_____ Describes and justifies the sampling approach.

_____ Describes how the characteristics of the sample population align with the general

population.

_____ Discusses how the sample selection impacts the generalizability of the study.

_____ Identifies strategies for recruiting participants.

_____ Specifies appropriate criteria for selecting participants.

_____ Addresses the relationship between the researcher and the participants.

_____ Justifies the number of participants.

DATA COLLECTION

_____ Describes and justifies the data collection method(s) (e.g., interview, focus group, observation).

_____ Addresses what types of data will be collected and the unit(s) of analysis.

_____ Includes detailed protocol(s) in appendix for data collection (e.g., interview

protocol/script, focus group protocol/script, etc.).

_____ Justifies contents of data collection protocols by connection to the research questions

posed in relation to the qualitative paradigm chosen.

_____ Clearly describes the process by which the data were generated, gathered, and recorded.

_____ Clearly describes the systems used for keeping track of data and emerging understandings

(research logs, reflective journals, and cataloging systems).

PROCEDURES FOLLOWED

_____ States the sequence of steps followed in conducting the research from development of the

research instrument(s) to data analysis.

_____ Details all steps in a way that another researcher could follow the steps to reproduce the study.

_____ Explains the relation of the pilot study to the full study, if applicable.

TRUSTWORTHINESS

_____ Addresses credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

_____ Shows evidence of quality by discussing how procedures will be/were followed to assure the

accuracy of the data and lessen the impact of researcher bias (e.g., trustworthiness, member

checks, triangulation, etc.).

ETHICAL CONCERNS

_____ Provides adequate measures for ethical protection of participants.

_____ Includes detailed information about the informed consent process and how informed consent will

be obtained.

_____ Includes Informed Consent Letter in Appendix.

_____ Includes detailed information about how confidentiality is addressed.

DATA ANALYSIS

_____ Articulates how and when the data will be or were analyzed.

_____ Aligns the detailed data analysis plan with the specific research design to generate

answers to the research questions.

_____ Describes procedures for dealing with discrepant cases.

_____ If a software program was used to aid analysis, clearly describes how it was used.

_____ Gives details about the coding procedure and how themes or categories were developed.

[QUANTITATIVE]

METHODOLOGY SELECTED

_____ Includes a description of the research design and approach.

_____ Provides justification for using the research design and approach.

_____ Demonstrates that the research design and approach derive logically from the problem or issue

statement.

_____ Supports the research design and its application with major and foundational sources.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS/HYPOTHESES

_____ Describes specific research questions and hypotheses (where appropriate) that:

_____ Are clear and succinct

_____ Are congruent with the **Statement of Problem**

_____ Are answerable/testable

_____ Correspond to the number of variables of interest

_____ Have hypotheses that correspond to research questions

_____ Are clearly stated

POPULATION AND SAMPLE

_____ Identifies and describes the source of the specific population and the population's characteristics.

_____ Identifies that permission has been obtained to access the population, if relevant.

_____ Describes the sampling method, its appropriateness, and the sampling frame.

_____ Identifies the sample size as sufficient in terms of statistical power to support the analyses.

_____ Identifies the criteria for selecting participants.

_____ Describes the sample characteristics.

ETHICAL CONCERNS

_____ Identifies procedures for protection and ethical treatment of human participants.

_____ Describes the informed consent process in detail, including how human participants will provide their informed consent, where applicable.

_____ Includes Informed Consent Letter in Appendix.

_____ Describes procedures to protect confidentiality and anonymity in data collection, analysis, reporting, and storage.

_____ Where applicable, describes in detail any treatment or intervention to which human participants will be exposed.

_____ Identifies concealment or deception as part of the treatment, if used.

_____ Identifies the process for debriefing human participants following use of concealment or deception.

_____ Identifies if a control group will be used, if the group will receive a standard intervention, and the nature of that intervention.

INSTRUMENTATION

List and describe the survey, research, or testing instruments and data collection forms (to be) used in gathering data for the study. The reason for the use of these instruments should also be given. Defend the choice of instruments and address reliability, validity, and utility of the instruments.

_____ Describes in detail all instrumentation or data collection tools, including:

_____ Instrument name, if using an existing instrument

_____ Specific type of instrument

_____ Instrument's measures in terms of constructs, concepts, or variables

_____ Scoring of scales, subscales, typologies and their interpretation

_____ Whether a new instrument is developed or an existing instrument is modified and describes its use.

_____ Published reliability and validity statistics for existing instruments OR a detailed plan for statistically assessing the reliability and validity of new or modified instrument(s) or existing instruments without established reliability or validity.

_____ Includes a copy of any instruments used in an appendix.

_____ Includes a detailed description of data that comprises each variable in the study.

_____ Includes operational definitions of variables.

_____ Provides a clear explanation of how the value of each variable will be derived from the instrument.

_____ Identifies the level of measurement (NOIR) for each variable.

_____ Either describes established (published) reliability and validity statistics or a clear plan to statistically validate the instrument (for modified or created instruments).

DATA COLLECTION

_____ Describes any pilot study results, if applicable.

_____ States the sequence of steps followed in conducting the research from development of the research instrument(s) to data analysis.

_____ Details all steps such that another researcher could follow the steps to reproduce the study.

DATA ANALYSIS

Addresses how the data will be/was analyzed. What statistical methods were used?

_____ Includes a detailed analysis plan that explains the descriptive and/or inferential analyses proposed or used.

_____ Descriptive statistical procedures

_____ Whether the data are normally distributed or the distribution is skewed

_____ Parametric and/or nonparametric statistical procedures

_____ Statistical power

VALIDITY

_____ Addresses internal and external validity threats and how they will be or were addressed.

[MIXED METHOD]

METHODOLOGY SELECTED

_____ Includes a description of the specific mixed method research design and approach.

_____ Research questions reflect the two phases, qualitative and quantitative, and the ordering of the two phases consistent with the specific mixed method design (explanatory, exploratory, or triangulation); hypotheses correspond to quantitative RQs, where appropriate.

_____ Provides justification for using the specific research design and approach.

_____ Shows that the research design and approach derives logically from the problem or issue statement.

_____ Supports the research design and its application with major and foundational sources.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS/HYPOTHESES

_____ Describes specific research questions and hypotheses (where appropriate) that:

_____ are clear and succinct

_____ are congruent with the **Statement of Problem**

_____ are answerable/testable

_____ correspond to the number of variables of interest

_____ correspond to research questions (if they are hypotheses)

_____ are clearly stated

_____ are open-ended (_not_ yes/no questions)

POPULATION AND SAMPLE

_____ Identifies and describes the source of the specific population and the population's characteristics for both phases.

_____ Identifies that permission has been obtained to access the population, if relevant.

_____ Describes for both phases the sampling method, its appropriateness, and the sampling frame.

_____ Identifies the sample size as sufficient in terms of statistical power to support the quantitative analyses.

_____ Identifies the sample size as sufficient in terms of data saturation for the qualitative phase.

_____ Identifies the criteria for selecting participants for both phases.

_____ Describes the sample characteristics for both phases.

ETHICAL CONCERNS

_____ Identifies procedures for protection and ethical treatment of human participants.

_____ Describes the informed consent process in detail, including how human participants will provide

their informed consent, where applicable.

_____ Includes Informed Consent Letter in Appendix.

_____ Describes procedures to protect confidentiality and anonymity in data collection, analysis,

reporting, and storage of data.

_____ Describes in detail, where applicable, any treatment or intervention to which human

participants will be exposed.

_____ If concealment or deception will be used, identifies that as part of the treatment.

_____ Identifies the process for debriefing human participants following use of concealment or

deception.

_____ Identifies if a control group will be used, if the group will receive a standard intervention,

and the nature of that intervention.

INSTRUMENTATION

List and describe the survey, research, or testing instruments, interview of observational protocols, and data collection forms used in gathering data for the study. The reason for the use of these instruments should also be given. Defend the choice of instruments, and address reliability, validity, and utility of the instruments.

Quantitative phase:

_____ Describes in detail all instrumentation or data collection tools, including:

_____ Instrument name, if using an existing instrument

_____ Specific type of instrument

_____ Instrument's measures in terms of constructs, concepts, or variables

_____ Scoring of scales, subscales, typologies, and their interpretation

_____ Whether a new instrument is developed or an existing instrument is modified and

describes its use.

_____ Published reliability and validity statistics for existing instruments OR a detailed plan for

statistically assessing the reliability and validity of new or modified instrument(s) or

existing instruments without established reliability or validity.

_____ Includes a copy of any instruments used in an appendix.

Qualitative phase:

_____ Describes and justifies data collection method(s) (e.g., interview, focus group, and observation).

_____ Justifies choices about which data to collect, including:

_____ Addresses what types of data will be collected and the unit(s) of analysis.

_____ Includes detailed protocol(s) in appendix for data collection (e.g., interview

protocol/script, focus group protocol/script, etc.).

_____ Justifies contents of data collection protocols by connection to the research questions

posed in relation to the qualitative paradigm chosen.

DATA COLLECTION

_____ Describes any pilot study results, if applicable.

_____ States the sequence of steps followed in conducting the research, from development of the

research instrument(s) to data analysis.

_____ Details all steps such that another researcher could follow the steps to reproduce the

study.

_____ Describes the role of the researcher in the qualitative data collection procedure.

_____ Addresses through methodological approaches the potential impact and minimization of

researcher bias.

DATA ANALYSIS

Addresses how the data were analyzed. What statistical methods were used?

_____ Includes an explanation of descriptive and/or inferential analyses used in the study, such as:

_____ Level of measurement (normal, ordinal, interval, or ratio) for each quantitative variable

_____ Description of parametric, nonparametric, or descriptive analytical tools used

_____ Distribution of the quantitative data

_____ Statistical power

_____ A detailed explanation of how qualitative data will be or were analyzed, procedures used,

and units of analysis used.

_____ Data analysis reflects the phases in alignment with the simultaneous or sequential mixed method

design and explains how analysis of qualitative and quantitative data will generate or generated

answers to the research questions.

QUALITY

_____ Addresses internal and external validity threats.

_____ Addresses trustworthiness, including: credibility, transferability, dependability, and

confirmability.

[FOR ALL METHODS OF INQUIRY]

SUMMARY

_____ Summarizes key points in the chapter.

_____ Transitions to Chapter IV.

_____Conforms to the recommended length of 10–25 pages for Chapter III.

CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

This chapter focuses on presentation of the results of the analysis of data gathered through the procedures detailed in Chapter III. The data analysis reported in Chapter IV must align with the processes detailed in Chapter III. The data are not presented as "raw" data. Instead, the student presents the results of the analyses conducted, aligned with the research questions and, if used, hypotheses. Presentation of the results places the findings in the context of the research questions and/or hypotheses. The format and content of this Results chapter differs greatly depending on whether the study is qualitative, quantitative, or mixed method. The checklists below are labeled accordingly. Write Chapter IV in past tense.

_____ Organizes all results such that they are easily understood by the reader (do not just present masses of data for the reader to analyze).

_____ Leads the reader carefully through the findings, highlighting the most important observations.

_____ Presents a simple, clear, and complete account of the results.

_____ Uses APA-formatted tables, charts, graphs, and/or illustrations for clarity.

_____ Does not just copy and paste the outputs of statistics or other programs.

_____ Omits discussion of the findings (which is presented in Chapter V).

INTRODUCTION

_____ Begins with the purpose of the chapter, shows how it fits in the dissertation, and discusses the organization of the chapter.

_____ Re-establishes the purpose of the study and the research questions [and hypotheses].

PILOT STUDY

_____ Discusses details regarding conducting the pilot study, if applicable.

_____ Describes and justifies modifications to existing instruments or procedures based on the results of pilot test.

[QUALITATIVE]

SAMPLE

_____ Presents a description of the sample participants and sample demographics or other appropriate characteristics of the unit(s) of study.

DATA COLLECTION

_____ Summarizes the actual logistics of the data collection.

_____ Describes unusual circumstances encountered during data collection.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

_____ Presents the results of analysis, rather than raw data, illustrated with selected representative quotes in a way to makes sense to the reader.

_____ Clearly presents the findings.

_____ Builds logically from the problem and the research design.

_____ Presents the findings, reflecting analysis consistent with the specific research design—goes beyond reporting percentages of who said what or just identifying themes and patterns.

_____ Presents the findings by major themes and sub-themes using section headings that are representative of the themes.

_____ Presents findings in a manner that addresses the research questions.

_____ Supports all findings with data.

_____ Accounts for all salient data in the findings.

_____ Includes discrepant cases and non-confirming data in the findings.

[QUANTITATIVE]

SAMPLE

_____ Presents description of the sample and sample demographics or other appropriate characteristics of the unit of study.

_____ Does not present raw data; presents results of descriptive and inferential analyses in a way that makes sense to the reader.

DATA COLLECTION

_____ Summarizes the actual logistics of the data collection.

_____ Describes unusual circumstances encountered during data collection.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

_____ Organization of results aligns with and addresses research questions and hypotheses.

_____ Findings are presented by major themes and sub-themes, using section headings that are

representative of the themes.

_____ Demonstrates rigorous methodological approaches.

_____ Reflects appropriate and correct use of data collection instruments.

_____ Uses research conventions and standard language/terminology to describe measures.

_____ Reports results of pilot tests, if used.

_____ Describes and justifies modifications to existing instruments or procedures based on the

results of pilot test.

_____Describes how any modifications affect instrument scoring and/or interpretation.

_____ Results of data analyses:

_____ Uses appropriate tools and approaches to display results.

_____ Makes interpretation and explanation of results consistent with the analyses.

_____ Reflects alignment with the specific research design, the research questions or

hypotheses, and the theoretical or conceptual framework of the study.

_____ Makes the organization and presentation of results correspond to and address each

research question and hypotheses, when used.

_____ Reports results of hypothesis testing and indicates support for accepting or rejecting the

null hypothesis when hypotheses are used.

_____ Develops sound analyses with appropriate use of statistics.

_____ Reports results that reflect conventional research language and format.

_____ Highlights findings that approach statistical significance, such as $p < .10$.

_____ Identifies any inconsistencies or contradictions reflected in the findings and suggests plausible

explanations.

_____ Includes additional findings.

CONCLUSIONS

_____ Concludes by logically and systematically summarizing the results pertaining to the research

questions and hypotheses.

[MIXED METHOD]

SAMPLE

_____ Presents description of the sample and sample demographics, or other appropriate

characteristics of the unit of study, for both phases of the study.

  _____ Does not present raw data; presents results of descriptive and inferential analyses and

  analysis of qualitative data in a way that makes sense to the reader.

  _____ Description of the sample reflects sample size and characteristics for each phase of the

  research (qualitative and quantitative).

DATA COLLECTION

_____ Summarizes the actual logistics of the data collection.

_____ Describes unusual circumstances encountered during data collection.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

_____ Organization of results aligns with and addresses the research questions and hypotheses,

consistent with the type of mixed method design.

_____ Findings are presented by major themes and sub-themes, using section headings that are

representative of the themes.

_____ Presents the approaches and results for both phases (qualitative and quantitative).

  _____ For an explanatory design, presents quantitative results first, describes how these

  findings were explored in the qualitative phase, and then presents the qualitative

  findings.

  _____ For an exploratory design, presents qualitative results, explains how these findings

  informed the quantitative phase, and then presents the quantitative findings.

  _____ In a triangulation design, presents both sets of data and triangulates the findings from the

  two phases.

_____ Demonstrates rigorous methodological approaches.

  _____ Reflects appropriate and correct use of data collection instruments.

  _____ Uses research conventions and standard language and terminology to describe measures.

  _____ Reports results of pilot tests, if used.

  _____ Describes and justifies modifications to existing instruments or procedures based on the

  results of pilot test.

  _____ Describes how any modifications affect instrument scoring and/or interpretation.

_____ Results of data analyses:

  _____ Uses appropriate tools and approaches to display results.

_____ Interprets and explains results consistent with the analyses.

_____ Reflects alignment with the specific mixed method research design, the research

      questions or hypotheses, and the theoretical or conceptual framework of the study.

_____ Makes the organization and presentation of results correspond to and address each

      research question and hypotheses, when used.

_____ Reports results of hypothesis testing, and indicates support for accepting or rejecting the

      null hypothesis when hypotheses are used.

_____ Develops sound analyses with appropriate use of statistics.

_____ Reports the results that reflect conventional research language and format.

_____ Highlights findings that approach statistical significance, such as $p < .10$.

_____ Identifies any inconsistencies or contradictions reflected in the findings and suggests plausible

   explanations.

_____ Includes additional findings.

CONCLUSIONS

_____ Concludes by logically and systematically summarizing the results pertaining to the research

   questions and hypotheses.

_____ Recommended length of Chapter IV is variable, based on the nature of the data.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

The discussion chapter is where you interpret the importance of your findings for research and practice and discuss your results within the context of other research on the topic. You may want to go back and update Chapter II with any new research studies that may now seem important to the study. In Chapter V, you will address the extent to which your results converge with or diverge from previous research. You will revisit the research you reviewed in your introduction and review of literature, and any other pertinent literature, and discuss how your results add to the knowledge on the topic. You should also discuss any limitations of your research (e.g., generalizability issues or measurement limitations). Finally, you will discuss the implications of your results and applications to practice, if appropriate, and provide suggestions for future research. [Section headings below are only suggestive.] Write Chapter V in past tense.

INTRODUCTION

_____ Begins with the purpose of the chapter, how it fits in the dissertation, and the organization of the chapter.

_____ Reviews the need for the study, the purpose of the research, the research questions that guided the study, and briefly restates the findings presented in Chapter IV.

_____ A restatement of the research problem is helpful to provide context.

INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

_____ Includes an overview and interpretation of the major findings of the study.

_____ Includes conclusions that address all the research questions and/or hypotheses.

_____ Carefully examines all findings, including those that do not support or only partially support the hypotheses (quantitative only).

_____ Contains references to all results reported in Chapter IV.

_____ Is comprehensive in terms of addressing the range of findings.

_____ Is bound by the evidence collected.

LIMITATIONS OF STUDY

_____ Discusses limitations that may affect the validity, generalizability, or trustworthiness of the results.

_____ Includes a reflection on the researcher's experience with the research process (qualitative only).

_____ Discusses possible personal biases or preconceived ideas and values.

_____ Discusses the influence of the researcher on the participants or the situation.

_____ Reflects on student's changes in thinking as a result of the study.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THEORY AND RESEARCH

_____Situates the findings in a larger body of literature on the topic, including the

conceptual/theoretical framework.

_____ Considers the findings in light of published research studies.

_____ Discusses implications of the current study findings as pertinent to current theory.

_____ Discusses implications of findings that support, extend, and refute prior knowledge.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

_____ Includes implications of the current study's findings for professional practice or applied settings (if

applicable).

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Based on the findings of the current study:

_____ Identifies topics that need closer examination and may generate a new round of research

questions.

_____ Recommends alternative research methods and design.

CONCLUSION

_____ Closes with a strong conclusion statement that makes the "take-home message" clear.

_____ Conforms to the recommended length of 15–25 pages for Chapter V.

REFERENCES

_____ Alphabetically lists **all** references cited in the dissertation.

_____ Uses APA style for listing references.

_____ **Do not** list references that were not cited in the dissertation.

APPENDIX (OR APPENDICES)

_____ Includes all additional information or materials that support, but are not a part of, the study in

Chapters I–V.

Examples include:

- Copies of instructions for participants;

- Permissions obtained from organizations or agencies to use resources, materials, or facilities;
- Copies of informed consent forms and instrumentation;
- Descriptions of any special conditions of the research, etc.; and
- Tables or graphs that supplement, but do not provide primary data gained from the study (subject to recommendations made elsewhere in this document).

_____ Student has permission from copyright holder to include previously copyrighted materials such as tests and measures.

BIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT (*OPTIONAL*)

_____ Includes a brief biographical statement about the author. The focus should be on the professional aspects of the individual's life but may include items such as place of birth, educational background, significant life events, reasons for choosing the field of study/specialization, and interest in the content of the study.

APPENDIX C: FORMATTING GUIDELINES

The dissertation is a scholarly document, creating a permanent record of original research. Both the content and the style of the document reflect on the student, the Dissertation Committee, and Ashford University. In order to appear as a scholarly publication and to have some uniformity with other dissertations from the University, please follow the formatting specifications presented here.

While the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* provides a style guide for submitting manuscripts, Ashford University has its own style guide for dissertation publication, as described in this Dissertation Formatting Specifications Appendix. Ashford University uses the most recent edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.) as the basic style guide for all papers as well as dissertations, and it should be used as a guide for all style and formatting issues not addressed in the following.

Recommendation: Begin using the required specifications on drafts of your dissertation as early as possible in order to become familiar with proper formatting and style.

GENERAL FORMATTING GUIDELINES

ELEMENT	SPECIFICATIONS
Font – main text	Times New Roman, 12-point
Font – footnotes	Times New Roman, 10-point
Margins (all pages, including those with tables and figures)	• Left: 1 ¼ inches (to allow for binding) • Top, right, bottom: 1 inch
Justification	• Left: justified • Right: ragged (not justified) • No hyphenation at the right margin

Spacing (lines)	• Double-space all pages, including abstract, except for the following (which should be single-spaced):
	  o Headings, subheadings, and table or figure captions *exceeding one line in length*
	  o Table of contents entrie*s exceeding one line in length* (double-space between entries)
	  o Footnotes (although individual footnotes are single-spaced, double-space between each separate footnote if more than one appears on a page)
	  o Long, block-indented quotes or narrative
	  o List entries (double space between numbers)
	  o Individual entries of more than one line in the Reference section (although individual reference entries are single-spaced, double-space between each separate reference)
	  o Table titles, table column and row headings, table text (double-space between rows), table notes
	  o Lengthy material in tables and appendices

Spacing (sentences)	*Single-space* after all punctuation except internal periods in abbreviations (e.g., i.e., U.S.). However, insert **two** spaces between

	sentences. See section 4.01 in the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.) for more detail.
Spacing (headings, tables)	• **Headings may have an extra space above to enhance readability. Be consistent throughout the manuscript in spacing around headings.** • **Headings may have an extra space above to enhance readability. Be consistent throughout the manuscript in spacing around headings.** • **Add an extra space above and below a table or figure to separate it from paragraphs or other tables/figures on the page.**
Paragraphs	• Each paragraph should be indented one-half inch • No extra spaces between paragraphs
Headings	• See Headings
Footnotes	• List consecutively at the bottom of the page where they first appear; or • Place footnotes in consecutive order on a separate page titled *End Notes*, following the Reference section.
Pagination	All pages (*except the title/cover page*) bear a page number. The preliminary pages are arranged and numbered as follows: *(see table below)* • If any of the preliminary pages exceed one page, advance the page numbers consecutively. • Preliminary page numbers are shown in Roman numerals at the *bottom center* of each page. • Chapter 1 begins on page 1. • Number pages sequentially from Chapter I through the end of the manuscript, in Arabic numerals centered in the footer at the *bottom center* of each page, in the Times New Roman 12-point.
Headers and Footers	• No text or page numbers in the header • Page number at the center of the footer
Tables and Figures	• See Tables and Figures

Preliminary Pages	Page Numbers
Title/signature page (not numbered)	(understood as page i, but not numbered)
Copyright notice	ii
Abstract	iii
Acknowledgements (Dedication optional)	iv
Table of Contents	v
Lists of Figures & Tables (if applicable)	vi
List of Appendices (if applicable)	vii

ARRANGEMENT

In its final form, the dissertation should be arranged in the following order: *preliminary pages* (title/signature page, abstract, copyright page, acknowledgements/dedication, table of contents, list of tables and figures, list of appendices), *text* (introduction, main body of text, summary or conclusion), and *references and supplemental sections* (footnotes, appendices, etc.).

TITLE (SIGNATURE) PAGE

Each copy of the dissertation must include a title page (signature page) prepared in accordance with the example shown in **Appendix D**. The title page does not bear a page number (though it is understood to be page i). Include the student's full legal name as it appears in Ashford University records. Only the Committee Chair signs the final document, which includes an appropriate signature line. List Dissertation Committee Members below the Chair's signature line, along with their credentials.

COPYRIGHT PAGE

This page consists of the following information centered on the page:

Copyright by

FULL LEGAL NAME OF STUDENT

Year the degree will be conferred

ABSTRACT AND KEY WORDS

An abstract (preliminary p. iii) must be included in each dissertation. The abstract should contain the title of the dissertation and the student's name in full, as follows:

Full Title of the Dissertation

by

Full Name of Student

Abstract

Text of the abstract . . . .

Key Words:

- Abstract should be approx. 2,450 characters (no longer than 350 words). An average 350-word abstract will contain about 70 characters per line with a maximum of 35 lines.
- Use the same paragraph formatting as used in the full manuscript.
- At the bottom of the abstract, include *key words*. The key words are used by other researchers to search for and identify information in various subject areas. The best way to determine this is to think about your own dissertation and what key words you would want to search for to find it.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS/DEDICATION

The Acknowledgements and Dedication pages should follow the Abstract (as preliminary pages iv, v). Center the heading at the top of the page.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

A table of contents is required and must reflect the outline and organization of the dissertation. If your dissertation includes tables, figures, appendices, these must be noted on separate pages as List of Tables and Figures and List of Appendices (identified by number and title). Lists should include page numbers. The heading should be centered at the top of the page. List your chapter headings flush to the left margin and subheadings indented beneath them. Corresponding page numbers should be inserted in a column on the right side of the page.

TEXT OF THE DISSERTATION

The text of the dissertation follows the Table of Contents. The first page of the text is page 1, followed by page 2, and so on, through the end of the manuscript. Page numbers should be in Arabic numerals, centered in the *bottom center* of each page, in 12 pt. font.

HEADINGS

Chapter headings should be shown in all caps (CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION) with chapter numbers in capital Roman numerals (CHAPTER II, CHAPTER III, etc.). Subsequent headers in each chapter should follow the APA style guide requirements for subsequent levels of headings/subheadings, with the first heading in a chapter being a Level 1 heading. See Section 3.03 "Levels of Headings" in the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.):

- The first heading used should be a Level 1 heading: Centered, Boldface, Capitalizing the first letter of each non-trivial word.
- A second level heading is formatted the same as a first level heading except it is positioned flush left.

- Third level headings are indented, boldface, and lowercase except for the first letter of the first word. End the third level heading with a period and start the first sentence of the section on the same line.
- While each chapter should include introductory text, do not include a heading called "Introduction," which is understood.
- Do not include a level of heading unless there is more than one section with that level.

CREDITING SOURCES

In-text citations using an author-date citation system must be included for all ideas that are not the student's own or are not common knowledge.

- In-text citations should conform to APA style (generally, author and date for paraphrased information and author, date, and page number for direct quotations).
- If the names of the authors and/or the date are included in the text, only the remaining required information is included in parentheses.
- Indirect sources (sources referenced in a secondary source) are indicated in the in-text citation, and the secondary source is listed in the reference list at the end of the paper (See section 6.17 of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.).
- Use secondary sources sparingly.
- All citations in the text have a corresponding reference in the reference section at the end of the dissertation (with the exception of personal interviews, personal email, or other online postings that are not retrievable).

REFERENCES AND SUPPLEMENTAL SECTIONS

REFERENCE SECTION

- Start the reference list on a new page following the body of the manuscript.
- The word "References" should appear centered at the top of the page.
- Do not bold, italicize, or underline the label. References should be arranged alphabetically by last name of the first author.
- Arrange multiple entries by the same author(s) by year of publication, with the earliest first.
- *Note that the reference section contains only those references directly cited in the text; it is not a bibliography.*
- Individual references should be single-spaced with a double-space between each individual reference entry.
- Each reference entry should be formatted with a hanging indent, meaning that the first line of each entry is set flush left and subsequent lines are indented .5" from the left. Use the Microsoft Word paragraph formatting pane to set "Spacing" to "Hanging."

Consult the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.) for specific examples of proper formatting of reference entries for each type of document or electronic material.

APPENDIX MATERIAL

If your paper has more than one appendix, label each one with a capital letter (Appendix A, Appendix B) in the order in which it is mentioned.

- Each appendix must have a title.
- Note that you must have permission from the copyright holder to include previously copyrighted materials such as tests and measures.

TABLES AND FIGURES

- Place tables and figures as close as possible to the first mention within the text. If small enough, place *below the first mention, or begin on the page immediately following the first mention* by number. (Note: Tables and figures provide the means by example for developing the text argument, but they do not constitute the argument; thus, they must be interpreted in your written text.)
- Separate tables and figures from text by triple space at top and bottom of table.
- Number tables and figures *sequentially throughout the manuscript (e.g., Table 1, Table 2, etc.; Figure 1, Figure 2, etc.)*. Do not use chapter numbers or letters to identify tables (e.g., Table 4-1, Table 4-A) except in the Appendix (e.g., Appendix A might contain one or more tables titled Table A-1, Table A-2, etc.).
- Use dissertation margin requirements for tables and figures. If necessary, print tables or figures that exceed the margins using landscape format.
- Do not break a table or figure between two pages unless it is impossible to include the entire table or figure on one page. If a table or figure is too large to fit on one page, use an abbreviated heading on the following page (e.g., Table 1 - Cont'd.).
- Tables and figures may be reduced, though titles and captions should remain in 12-point font.
- Limit lines in a table to those that are necessary for clarity (usually only that separating headings from columnar data), and do not use vertical lines. Use generous spacing between columns and rows, as well as strict alignment to clarify relationships within a table. Individual entries in rows and columns should be single-spaced, with a double space between each separate entry.
- Note that authors must obtain permission to reproduce or adapt all or part of a table (or figure) from a copyrighted source (see "Inclusion of Previously Published Material" below). If you plan to include copyrighted material in your dissertation, you must include letters of permission when you submit your final manuscript to UMI/ProQuest.

    Tables - Tables consist of material contained in a tabular format of columns and rows. Table titles should be brief, but clear and explanatory. Table numbers and titles are placed *above the actual table*.

Example of Table heading format:

Table 1

Errors for Younger and Older Groups by Level of Difficulty

Figures - Figures commonly consist of pictorial elements, including charts, graphs, drawings, maps, and photographs. Figure numbers and titles are placed *below the actual figure*.

Example of Figure caption format:

ACTUAL FIGURE HERE

Figure 1. Title of figure here.

REFERENCES AND CITATIONS

EXAMPLES OF CITATIONS WITHIN THE TEXT

1) At end of quoted material in text (closing punctuation outside parentheses):

   hard territory. "I feel strengthened by it, like a ship that's been through hard winds, torrents, and then finally comes to a harbor" (Marshall, 1992, p. 36). Last year, on . . . .

2) At end of long block quote in text (closing punctuation precedes parentheses):

   After the emotion comes exhaustion. Your soul is tired. And in the calm of that exhaustion, your spirit begins to muster itself in preparation for a kind of rebirth. (Caine, 1978, p. 60)

PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED MATERIAL

Students must gain permission from copyright holders and provide citations directly beneath copyrighted material being used. For example,

ACTUAL FIGURE OR TABLE

Note. From [or The data in column 1 are from] *Title of Book* (p. 103), by A.N. Author and C. O. Author, 1994, Place of Publication: Publisher. Copyright 1994 by the Name of Copyright Holder. Reprinted [or Adapted] with permission.

PERSONAL COMMUNICATIONS
- Cite in the text as (J. Doe, personal communication, January 1, 1998).
- Do not include in Reference section.

REFERENCE LIST PREFERENCES

- Single-space each reference.
- Double-space between individual references.

JOURNAL ARTICLES

- Include a doi when available. If retrieved from a library database, do not include "Retrieved by" location or date.
- Only the first word of the article's title and subtitle (the first word after the colon) and proper nouns are capitalized.
- Italicize the name of the journal but not the title of the article.
- Capitalize major words in the name of the journal.
- Italicize the *volume number* (if any).
- Only the first word of the article's title and subtitle (the first word after the colon) and proper nouns are capitalized.

BOOKS

- Only the first word of the article's title and subtitle (the first word after the colon) and proper nouns are capitalized.
- Italicize book title.
- Use the official 2-letter U.S. Postal Service abbreviations for publisher's state location (MA, CA, etc.).
- Omit superfluous terms such as Publishers, Co., or Inc.; retain the words *Books* and *Press.*

Consult the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.) for specific examples of proper formatting of reference entries for each type of document or electronic material.

APPENDIX D: TITLE PAGE TEMPLATE AND EXAMPLE

TITLE OF DISSERTATION (single space title if more than one line)

A dissertation submitted

by

STUDENT'S FULL NAME (no credentials)

Month, Year

to

ASHFORD UNIVERSITY

Upon the recommendation of the Faculty and the approval of the Board of Trustees, this dissertation is hereby accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

[choose one] DOCTOR OF PSYCHOLOGY / DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY in ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND LEADERSHIP/ DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY in HUMAN SERVICES/ DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY in EDUCATION

Approved by:

_____(signature of chair)_____
Name of Chair, degree
Committee Chair

Committee Members:
Name, Degree
Name, Degree

HOW TO WRITE A DISSERTATION: A TEMPLATE PROVIDING STRUCTURE AND CLARITY

A dissertation submitted

by

ASHFORD A. ANTELOPE

November, 2018

to

ASHFORD UNIVERSITY

Upon the recommendation of the Faculty and the approval of the Board of Trustees, this dissertation is hereby accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY in ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND LEADERSHIP

Approved by:

_____

Irene F. Stein, PhD
Committee Chair

Committee Members:
Jodie Hemerda, PhD
Tami Beaty, EdD

APPENDIX F: DISSERTATION WRITING TIPS

1. Avoid words that imply absolutes, such as *the research proves.* Instead, scholarly terminology such as *the research data or findings suggest* or *imply* is more appropriate.

2. Use of vague or colloquial expressions that one might use in normal conversations should not be used in scholarly writings. Avoid the use of jargon and expressions that are not scholarly. Examples inappropriate for dissertations: *nevertheless, on one hand, in other words, corner the market, otherwise, at the broadest level, ripple effects, fills the gap, as a bonus, closed the loop, large, argued* (unless the writer knows an argument did occur), *bridging the gap*.

3. Ensure that the referent*s for all pronouns are clear. Avoid* the use of pronouns such as *this, that, their, them, those, its,* etc. unless the referent is clearly and specifically known. Provide an example here.

4. Watch the use of singular and plural in the same sentence. Subject, verb, and object should all be either singular or plural. Be consistent, even between sentences.

5. The word *data* is plural; the singular is *datum*.

6. Do not use an apostrophe when referencing events occurring within a specific year of a given decade. For example, when referring to events that occurred within the year 1980, one should write 1980s and not 1980's.

7. Avoid absolute phrases such as *will contribute* or *will show*. It is recommended that learners use phrases such as *may* or *might contribute*.

8. Always use specific references to time. Vague references, such as *today, recent, currently*, and *this* should be avoided because some readers may not read the dissertation until sometime in the future.

9. All paragraphs should contain 3–5 sentences that support a **single idea**. Many learners inappropriately construct paragraphs containing only one or two sentences. Conversely, many learners inappropriately have very long paragraphs that are composed of unrelated sentences.

10. Students often overuse the words *this researcher* when it may be more important to state what occurred in the study. Instead *of this researcher placed the mouse in the tub*, say *the mouse was placed in the tub*. Focus on the action taken rather than on yourself as the performer of the action. The use of first person may be permitted for clarity.

11. Avoid anthropomorphisms (attributing human characteristics to an inanimate object). *Research* cannot *demonstrate* or *show* (or actually do much of anything). *Research results* can *indicate*.

12. Avoid stringy sentences. Stringy sentences are so long the reader forgets the beginning of the sentence before reaching the end. Break long sentences into shorter sentences. A good rule of thumb is that sentences should be no more than 40 words. Longer sentences should be revised for succinctness and clarity. (See sections 3.08 and 3.09 in the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association,* 6th edition.)

13. Past tense should be used to describe previous research or when referencing quotes, as the process has already been completed. An example of the appropriate use of past tense might be: *Jones (2005) defined* or *Smith (2004) published*.

14. Proposals and dissertations should be written in scholarly language. Non-scholarly words that begin sentences may be redundant with other words or ideas in the sentence. Revise to scholarly tone and

presentation. See section 3.21 in *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.). Examples may include, among others: *Additionally, As a result, Accordingly, Because of, Clearly, Consequently, Essentially, Finally, Furthermore, For example, However, In addition, In spite of, It was found, Moreover, Nevertheless, Overall, Therefore*, and *Thus*.

15. Place periods and commas within closing quotation marks (US rule; different in UK). Colons and semicolons are placed outside closing quotation marks. Question marks and explanation points should be inside the quotation marks only if they are part of the quoted material.

APPENDIX G: DOCTORAL RESEARCH COMPATIBILITY TEMPLATE

To ensure compatibility, potential Chairs and students might consider asking the following questions *prior* to initiating a Chair/Student relationship.

Chair	Research	Writing Proficiency	Feedback	Expectations
Potential Chairs: You might ask potential dissertation or ADP students these questions before signing and submitting the *Committee Chair Request form.*	Why did you choose your research topic? Do you have experience/prior knowledge of the topic?	Would you please share the preliminary LOI or PJT you developed? Are you willing to share a written assignment from one of your courses?	How often do you expect feedback from your Chair?	What are your expectations of your doctoral research Chair? What type of leader or coach do you work with most effectively?
	What is your research method or project approach? How does your method or approach align with your problem/ justification statement and study purpose?	How would you feel if your Chair recommended that you obtain extra writing support? Are you will to seek help to polish your academic writing, if necessary?	What kind of feedback do you expect? (e.g. verbal, written)	How much direct supervision would you like from your Chair? Do you prefer to work independently, or do you prefer close supervision?
	How familiar are you with the research method or project approach you chose?		How frequently do you want to communicate about your progress? As needed? On a regular basis?	Do you tend to be self-directed, or do you work better with schedules and deadlines?
				What other questions do you have for me?
Student	**Research**	**Writing Proficiency**	**Feedback**	**Expectations**
Students: You might ask these questions of potential Chairs to assess the right fit for you and your learning style.	Do you specialize in quantitative or qualitative research? How familiar are you with my proposed research design or project approach?	Would you like to see a writing sample from a previous class?	How long does it usually take you to provide feedback on drafts? One week? Two weeks?	What do you expect from a doctoral research student? What kinds of students do best under your supervision?
	Do you require students to hire statisticians or	Would you like to review my preliminary LOI or PJT?	How many drafts are you willing to read? Is there a	How do you prefer to communicate – phone, email, text?

	research methodologists?		maximum number of drafts you will read?	Will you accept unscheduled phone calls, texts, or emails, or do you prefer to schedule communication in advance?
	What questions do you have about my proposed project?		What is the primary focus of your feedback—alignment, content, methodology, writing or formatting?	Will you review drafts when we are not officially in a dissertation or ADP class?
				What other questions do you have for me?

APPENDIX H: CHANGE MATRIX TEMPLATE

Comment Identifier	Reviewer Comment	Page/Para. (Original Draft)	Changes Made and/or Comments	Page/Para. (New Draft)
Consecutively number the reviewer comments you are responding to.	*Copy the reviewer comment.*	*List the page and paragraph numbers where the comment was made.*	*Describe the changes that were made, and/or comments responding to questions or concerns.*	*List the page and paragraph numbers where the change(s) was made.*

Add as many rows as you need…

Example:

Comment Identifier	Reviewer Comment	Page/Para. (Original Draft)	Changes Made and/or Comments	Page/Para. (New Draft)
Chapter 1 Purpose of the study Comment 1	The purpose should be consistent across the proposal in terms of the focus, intent, and specific population. The purpose must align fully with the research questions. In some places, it does, but the language fluctuates.	Throughout the entire chapter	Aligned the purpose statements so that they are all the same.	iii, abstract 7, para 2 13, para 1 72, para 2 73, last para
Chapter 1 Overview of Research Design Comment 2	The student provided detail about the data sources and techniques but is missing the research design description and justification. The student should briefly describe and justify the choice of a qualitative single exploratory case study	Entire section	Created a description of research design and justification.	Pages 13 last para 14-15 in entirety Page 72 para 2 73 last para 74 para 1 and 2

	design and its appropriateness to address the purpose and answer the research questions.			
Chapter 3 Ethical Concerns Comment 3	The student should address procedures to protect confidentiality and privacy in data collection, reporting, and storage (APA recommends 5 years).	Chapter 3	Added that I will keep the data for 5 years and then destroy it.	Page 101 para 1
Chapter 3 Data Analysis Comment 4	The student should discuss explicitly how the results will be triangulated within and across the units of analysis and multiple data sources in the proposed study to reveal patterns of convergence and divergence and generate answer the research sub-questions.	Chapter 3	Created a more detailed section on triangulation.	Page 17 last para Page 18 1st para Page 91 para2 and 3 92 para 1