

La Sierra University
School of Education

EDRS 798: Doctoral Dissertation (12 units)
Dissertation Syllabus & Handbook

2014-2015 Update

EDRS 798: Doctoral Dissertation (12 units)

I. Course Description

A. Bulletin Course Description

Structured research, either qualitative or quantitative in nature, guided by the chair of the dissertation committee. Oral defense of written dissertation upon approval of manuscript by the dissertation committee.

Prerequisite: Successful completion of the Qualifying Examination and consent of the department chair.

B. Textbooks (selected with chair consultation)

American Psychological Association. (current edition). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association*. Washington, D.C.:

Booth, Wayne C., Williams, Joseph M., & Colomb, Gregory G. (2008). *The craft of research*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Davis, Gordon B., Parker, Clyde A. & Straub, Detmar W. (2012). *Writing the doctoral dissertation*. Hauppauge, NY: Barron's.

Roberts, Carol M. (2010). *The dissertation journey: A practical and comprehensive guide to planning, writing, and defending your dissertation*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Williams, Joseph M. (2013). *Style: Lessons in clarity and grace*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

A very good Dictionary

Roget's International Thesaurus

C. Course Objectives

Upon successful completion of this course, the student will be able to

- Conduct creditable scholarly research
- Successfully defend his or her dissertation research
- Produce a manuscript for publication in a professional or scholarly journal
- Make professional presentations based on his or her research

II. Enrollment in this Course

Students writing a dissertation must register for at least one unit of dissertation credit each quarter in order to obtain access to the university's resources, including advising from the dissertation committee chair, advising from other dissertation committee members, and library resources. Continuous registration is required until the final dissertation manuscript has been accepted.

If the student has registered for 12 credits, but has not completed the research and dissertation, the student must register for *SECE 910: Dissertation Continuation (1unit)* each quarter until the dissertation is completed and accepted.

III. Academic Honesty

Because scholars communicate, consider ideas, and contrast understandings in writing, it is important to be able to rely on each other in an atmosphere of openness, trust, and clarity. The proper use of citations allows colleagues to double-check one's interpretation of someone else's work, or to follow-up in greater depth if interested in a particular idea. For this reason, academic honesty is of critical importance. It is *important to use quotation marks where needed and to cite the source* of all significant ideas, concepts, paraphrases, and quotations.

The discipline standard is APA style. A good and convenient online source for information on APA style is <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>. Because academics need to be able to rely on each other's work with confidence, please provide proper attribution of all ideas, paraphrases, and quotations inserted into papers. *A purposeful or careless breach of academic integrity will result in project* and may result in a grade of U for the course or, in some cases, being dropped from the program.

To be sure to avoid misunderstandings about the definitions of academic honesty or academic dishonesty, or regarding the university's policies regarding academic integrity, refer www.lasierra.edu/integrity .

Introduction

The Purpose of the Ed.D. Dissertation

The dissertation process represents the culminating experience of a student's doctoral studies, in which the student has opportunity to undertake independent, original research and apply critical thinking and research skills to address issues in the field of Education. The Ed.D. dissertation will explore issues having implications for policy or practice, contributing new knowledge or understandings which will help educational personnel or organizations to more effectively accomplish their mission.

The Dissertation in Relation to the Program of Study

Up to the point of beginning work on the dissertation, students have been completing courses required for their program of study. Preparing a dissertation moves students into a new and unique experience that requires self-discipline, strong organizational skills, the integration of all that has been studied, attention to new and heavier demands on writing and research capabilities, and the ability to work in close communication with the dissertation committee chair over an extended period of time. The student's internal motivation and commitment, and willingness to persist in the face of challenges, are key to successful and timely completion of the dissertation.

Each dissertation follows a logical organizational structure, which becomes clear as the student formulates the inquiry and designs the study to explore the problem. The chair and members of the dissertation committee guide the student through this process. While their consultation is invaluable, it is the student whose initiative, self-discipline, and commitment will see the process through to successful completion.

This handbook is intended to provide direction and guidelines so that students may experience entry into the scholarly world as a positive and productive endeavor, culminating in the celebration of completion.

A General Overview of the Dissertation

Characteristics of the Dissertation

Students are given the opportunity, through the dissertation, to document their knowledge in a specialized area of study, to demonstrate their ability to define a problem, and to conduct original research to add to the understanding of the problem. The doctorate is awarded to those who have not only completed the required number of credits, but who have demonstrated significant skills in conceptualizing, conducting, and defending their original research. It is crucial, therefore, that a student possesses the ability to proceed beyond classwork to the completely new task of carrying out research. The doctoral dissertation in the field of Education, therefore, must meet all of the following criteria:

- **Deal with a significant issue or problem**

- The Ed.D. is a professional doctoral degree, meaning practitioners approaching the dissertation must confront and solve practical problems in administration and leadership, curriculum and instruction, or in school psychology and counseling. The doctoral dissertation must *deal with a relevant issue* and must *address an actual problem* (i.e., a matter of professional concern or activity), which might be addressed in practice if there were a better understanding of the phenomena involved. This research may contribute to a clearer understanding of a philosophical issue, testing or development of a theory, or the development and evaluation of a new practice. The research, therefore, can be either basic or applied, but it must be relevant to some problem faced by educators.

- **Demonstrate a theoretical connection and a clear methodology**

- The student must plan the dissertation research within some broad range of theory and must employ a clear methodology. The theories and methodologies are to be generally associated with one or more of the academic disciplines. The student must employ a recognized and accepted set of methods and techniques in pursuing the research, or create and test new methods and techniques.
- The student, in consultation with the dissertation chair, may select a methodology that best fits the nature of the problem and the extent to which it has been investigated. In other words, the research question will lead to the choice of methodology used. Methods may include experimental design, ethnography, case studies, phenomenology, correlational studies, historical studies, and grounded theory, depending on the appropriateness of the methodology to the problem under investigation.
- Because various faculty members hold expertise in certain methodologies, it is the responsibility of the student to consult with those faculty members whose research interests and methodological skills are matched with his or her projected area of research.

- **Explain the phenomena being studied**

- The dissertation not only describes the phenomena being studied, but endeavors to demonstrate, based on evidence, how something functions, why it functions the way it does, how it came to be, and/or how it is likely to function in the future. Regardless of methodology, all research at the doctoral level will seek to analyze, interpret and explain the phenomena under investigation as a significant ingredient in the solution of a problem.

- **Have thematic and generalizable results**

- Research should deal with a significant issue or problem for which the results will have

implications for or be applicable to a broader audience. The breadth of interest will depend on the type of problem, the related theoretical constructs, and the methodology selected for investigating the problem. While some phenomena are limited, the student may, where appropriate, generalize to common or similar professional settings, and may make wider recommendations based on the findings of the study.

- **Be original and creative**

- In the dissertation process the student demonstrates the ability to conduct original research. The student's originality is seen in the conceptualization of the problem, identification of theoretical constructs related to the problem, and methodology chosen for investigation. Each doctoral student seeks to ascertain how the phenomenon has been investigated by other researchers, and chooses an as-yet-untried approach in finding out new information or understandings about that phenomenon. Additionally, replication of a previous study may be legitimate if the new study adds to the knowledge base by broadening the scope of the methodology.

- **Be of sufficient scope**

- The typical challenge a student will face is that of keeping the scope of the dissertation narrow enough to complete the study in a reasonable and limited length of time. As a demonstration of an individual's ability to conduct an original research, the dissertation will include the statement of the problem, a literature review, a presentation and discussion of the methodology used, a presentation of the results, and the discussion of those results.
- In considering whether a proposed dissertation is of significant scope, students may consider the following criteria: sufficient number of variables, reasonable degree of complexity, a sample size that is significant within the methodology used, adequate investigation of sources, replicability of the study, applicability of the study, and publishable quality of the study.

- **Be excellent in quality**

- The following descriptor checklist may help with analyzing dissertation quality:
 - The dissertation was intended to address a problem or issue in such a way as to make a significant contribution to the field of knowledge.
 - The research question (or questions) were clearly presented.
 - The theoretical constructs were clearly connected and relevant to the problem. If new theory was built, it is logical and substantiated with evidence.
 - The review of literature and theory is well-organized, relevant and thorough.
 - The research design relates logically to the problem statement, and is rigorous and internally consistent.
 - The findings are clearly reported, demonstrating an understanding of how they relate to the research methods used.
 - The discussion of the results is compelling and convincing, with reference to theory, practice and recommendations for further study.

- The dissertation demonstrates that the student employed critical thinking skills at each step of the process, and in the written and oral presentation.

Student and Faculty Responsibilities

During the last quarter of coursework, providing a 3.50 GPA has been maintained, students are expected to schedule their Qualifying Examination. The Qualifying Examination is not only a comprehensive examination that calls for a demonstration of mastery in the specialized field of study, it also is an indicator of fluency in the discipline, analytical and writing skills, and ability to reference and apply key theories and research to practice. The Qualifying Examination provides the School of Education with important evidence that the student is prepared to progress to the dissertation phase with a reasonable probability of success.

Approximately 1% of the adult population of the United States holds a doctorate. According to the *The Council of Graduate Schools*, the national completion rate for doctoral degrees is about 56.6% (Sowell, Zhang, Redd and King, 2008). Few students have difficulty completing their coursework and maintaining the required minimum GPA, but the independence and relative lack of structure of the dissertation phase results in some candidates arriving at the time limits of their program with ABD (all but dissertation) status.

The faculty of the School of Education expects that students will finish successfully and in a timely manner. The doctoral degree signifies that one is a disciplined thinker, a self-regulated learner, and a thought leader in a specialized academic field and community. Therefore the faculty will not generally take initiative to pursue and urge students regarding continued progress with research. With respect for students' self-direction, motivation and accountability, and with respect for the philosophy, policies and procedures of the School, faculty members are committed to providing scholarly support and responding to student questions and requests for review of drafts in a timely and helpful manner. While an undertaking as complex as a dissertation will often include various difficulties or unplanned delays, faculty members commit to helping the student to minimize and mitigate both.

Having outlined faculty commitment to support students in the dissertation process, there remain some non-negotiables which are solely the responsibility of the student. These are listed below and explained more fully later in this Handbook.

1. The dissertation committee must be approved by the Dean of the School of Education.
2. The committee chair must agree that the dissertation proposal is sufficiently developed before the student may present it to the other members of the dissertation committee for review.
3. The student may **not** begin collecting research data until the proposal has received formal approval from the dissertation committee and from the university's Institutional Review Board (IRB).
4. All chapters of the dissertation must be completed by the end of winter quarter of the year in which the student plans to graduate. No dissertations completed after winter quarter will be considered for defense prior to fall quarter.
5. Dissertation defenses must be completed prior to May 1 of the year in which the student plans to graduate. There are **no exceptions**, so the student is strongly encouraged to include a "contingency buffer" into the timeline in case of unexpected delay of some sort. To adapt a common saying, "Procrastination on your part does not constitute an emergency on the part of your dissertation committee."

This Handbook is intended to offer guidance and advice with the process. However, the successful completion of the dissertation process is dependent upon a collaboration between the student and the dissertation committee, even more specifically, between the student and the committee chair. A commitment to regularly visit, telephone, or e-mail one's committee chair has been cited by doctoral students as key to completing a dissertation, regardless of the amount of progress made between scheduled contacts with the chair. A monthly or bi-weekly contact schedule has been found to be helpful.

The School of Education faculty wishes their students rich blessings and insights as they plan and conduct their investigation, analyze the data, evaluate the findings, and draw conclusions that will make a difference to students, add to the discipline, and enrich the academic community.

Overview of the Sequence of Steps in Completing the Dissertation

In order to facilitate a positive outcome in the dissertation process, students are urged to carefully follow these steps in the sequence listed:

1. Satisfactorily complete courses required for your program.
2. Successfully complete the Qualifying Examination and progress to Candidacy.
3. Select a dissertation committee by following this process:
 - Be well on your way to selecting a dissertation topic. A topic may suggest itself during the latter stages of your coursework or may be initiated through an independent study. The topic begins to take sharper form during your research classes, but may change as you discuss potential topics with faculty. Knowing the general outlines of your research topic will be helpful as you solicit a committee chair and select committee members.
 - Your dissertation committee chair, a faculty member from the School of Education, must be approved by the chair of your department. Once you have consulted with your department chair, approach faculty members to seek one who is willing to serve as chair.
 - Discuss with your chair other potential committee members. You may have three or four committee members including the chair. You are strongly encouraged to include a committee member who is not a faculty member in the School of Education, and is academically qualified with relevant expertise for the topic. Do not invite the committee members; this will be arranged through the Dean's office once you have submitted your committee proposal.
 - Formally submit your proposed committee list to the Dean's Office. The form for this request may be found in the appendix of this Handbook or online at http://lasierra.edu/fileadmin/documents/education/education/files/Student_Request_for_Dissertation_Committee.pdf
4. Work only with your dissertation committee chair until the chair determines that the proposal is ready to be reviewed by the other committee members. The chair will schedule the proposal presentation.
5. Give a formal presentation of the dissertation proposal to the dissertation committee and obtain a vote of approval to proceed in the process.

6. Obtain approval for conducting your research from the Institutional Review Board.
<https://lasierra.edu/irb/>
7. Begin data collection and analysis.
8. Work with chair and dissertation committee to complete dissertation chapter by chapter. The Chair will indicate to you when each chapter is ready to send to your committee members for their feedback and evaluation.
9. Submit the completed dissertation, prior to the end of winter quarter, to the committee, as free as possible of grammar and style errors. Make recommended revisions in consultation with your chair, and obtain the committee's approval to defend your dissertation. The committee chair will coordinate the scheduling of the defense.
10. In order to qualify for the June graduation, satisfactorily defend the dissertation prior to May 1.
11. Make the revisions required by your committee. Work with the dissertation secretary to ensure that APA formatting is followed correctly throughout the dissertation and the final document is free from grammar and style errors. Keep in mind that the dissertation secretary will be working with multiple candidates and editing is a time consuming and tedious work that should not be rushed. If you have defended early enough in the timeline, you are more likely to have the full attention of the dissertation secretary and a shorter turnaround time on your final copy.
12. Submit revised, completed, and approved final copy of your dissertation to the Dean's Office by May 31.

Specific Guidelines and Information for the Dissertation Process

Dissertation Process

To produce a dissertation of which you and the university can be justly proud, it is essential that your dissertation meet certain quality standards that are generally recognized in graduate education. The faculty of the La Sierra University School of Education has adopted the following criteria for doctoral research, indicating that the dissertation process should

- Present the relevance of existing theories to the problem.
- Include an original and unique dimension that builds on cited research.
- Enable the candidate to enter the national or regional dialogue.
- Be sufficiently broad for generalization to a larger audience.
- Acculturate the candidate to the scholarly community.
- Encourage the continuation of scholarly activity.
- Reflect the use of appropriate methodology typical of research commonly found in dissertations, including adherence to APA writing style.

Dissertation Topic and Committee

The first steps in producing a dissertation are: (1) the selection of a topic (2) the selection and appointment of a committee chair and (3) the selection and appointment of a research committee to provide advisement throughout the process.

Dissertation Topic

Early in your doctoral studies, you should be thinking about research topics that interest you. Keep a list of ideas as they come to you or as they are suggested in class discussions. As you read for your various classes, add to or delete from your list of ideas. Talk informally with your professors. Peruse dissertations available in the library collections and online through the library database. Pay special attention to the recommendations for further study, which are found near the end of dissertations. Ask about your professors' scholarly interests. Discussing your ideas for potential dissertation topics with several faculty members helps you in selecting your topic and in choosing a committee. As your ideas about topics and committee members crystallize, you will want to discuss them with your adviser and department chair. The topic you eventually select must be a topic useful to you and a topic of interest to a faculty member willing to serve as your advisor.

Final selection of your topic will not occur until your coursework is nearly completed. You will need to consider such factors as the relationship of your topic to your field of specialized study, availability of instruments needed, and practical feasibility of the study. Select a topic related to an area of academic strength in which you can conduct research responsibly. Finally, be sure that adequate La Sierra University resources are available for the support of the research, such as faculty with expertise to give guidance, library holdings (or access to relevant documents and databases), and laboratory facilities.

The Dissertation Committee

The dissertation committee chair is the first member of the committee selected, in consultation with your department chair. The responsibility for assigning a chair ultimately rests with the dean, but you have the

opportunity to seek out and request a chair who is willing to work with you and is interested in your topic. This chair must be a faculty member within the School of Education and typically holds appointment in your department of specialization. Work with your committee chair to select the remaining members of your committee, including your external committee member.

The dissertation committee chair carries the primary responsibility for guiding you through your dissertation and is the person with whom you work most closely. The first requirement for a committee chair is familiarity with the content and/or methodology of your potential topic. Failure to find a chair who can competently guide the research may mean changing your topic. A strong and mutually respectful working relationship with your committee chair is of utmost importance.

The dissertation committee membership shall consist of three or four members including the chair. The School of Education strongly recommends inclusion of one committee member from outside of the School of Education whose record of scholarship is equivalent to that required of a member of the School of Education faculty. The external committee member may be from the La Sierra University faculty or a member of administration from outside the School of Education, or may be a qualified individual who is not employed by La Sierra University. The external member's area of expertise should be relevant to the area of the dissertation. All other members of the committee must be faculty in the School of Education.

When you have listed all your potential committee members in consultation with your chair, be sure to submit a completed and signed Student Request for Dissertation Committee form to the Dean's office for approval of your committee. The form may be found at:
http://lasierra.edu/fileadmin/documents/education/education/files/Student_Request_for_Dissertation_Committee.pdf

To sum up: the responsibilities of the dissertation committee chair are to:

- provide guidance for the dissertation proposal and act as chair during dissertation committee meetings,
- supervise completion of the dissertation,
- supervise the communication with the committee
- coordinate the scheduling of the proposal presentation and the dissertation defense
- act as chairperson of the final oral defense.

The responsibilities of the committee members are to

- provide additional advisement to the student and/or act as the dissertation committee chair in the absence of the chair,
- read and critique the dissertation proposal and participate in committee deliberations during consideration of the proposal, and
- read the dissertation drafts and respond in a timely manner to the student and the committee chair with feedback, participate in questions and dialogue during the final oral defense, and participate in the committee deliberations at the defense.

The Proposal

The dissertation proposal is designed to show the purpose and organization of your research. The proposal gives your committee enough information to determine whether the topic you are investigating and the procedures you plan to use will be appropriate.

The proposal serves as a contract between you and the dissertation committee that, once formally approved by the dissertation committee and the IRB, constitutes an agreement that data may be collected and the study may be completed. As long as you follow the steps outlined in the proposal, committee members are discouraged from demanding significant changes to the study after the proposal has been approved. However, it is not uncommon to expect modest changes, additions or deletions, as it is impossible to predict the unexpected turns that research can take.

Proposal Development

The research methods courses are designed to help you understand methodology and to move you toward the process of writing a formal research proposal. It is possible that you will have completed, or nearly completed, the research proposal by the completion of these classes. These classes are a valuable resource and have potential to move you through the first stages of your research, although final proposal approval is the responsibility of your committee.

Proposal Format and Content

In both the proposal and the dissertation you are expected to follow the latest editions of The School of Education Doctoral Dissertation Handbook and the American Psychological Association Publication Manual. If necessary, students may be expected to use the paid services of a professional editor prior to the successful defense of their dissertations; careful and thorough work at all stages will reduce the cost of the editorial services prior to graduation.

Your proposal will consist of the first three dissertation chapters.

Preparation of Your Proposal

Your proposal is to be prepared in a logical, polished form. Your committee judges your fitness to conduct research on your chosen topic based on the quality of the proposal.

If you are not fluent and/or do not have strong expertise in writing in the English language, you are advised to seek help at the Writing Center and/or to employ the services of an editorial assistant who can aid you in polishing your prose for presentation in the approved format and style. Your committee members are not expected to serve as writers or editors. As a researcher, these responsibilities are yours.

Committee Involvement

During the preparation of your proposal, you will have opportunity to establish an effective working relationship with your committee chair. All drafts are to be submitted first to your committee chair for evaluation and comment. Once your committee chair has given approval, the drafts are to be shared with the other members of your committee, who will copy any written responses to both you and the committee chair. You are expected to maintain this process throughout the writing of the dissertation.

Once both your committee chair and the members of your committee have had opportunity to evaluate your proposal, request your committee chair to schedule your proposal presentation with your committee. This is where formal consideration will take place.

For the proposal presentation you must furnish copies of your dissertation proposal to each committee member, including the chair. In this formal face-to-face meeting, your committee will discuss your

proposal and question you regarding any areas needing clarification and will converse with you about any parts needing revision. The committee will then consider a vote of approval for your proposal. They may or may not invite you to remain for this session. Your committee chair will direct you regarding this.

Institutional Research Board (IRB)

If you are conducting research involving human subjects as part of your degree program, you must submit a proposal of research to the Institution of Review Board (IRB) for approval. This proposal should include the following elements:

- a general summary of the purpose of the study,
- a detailed description of the study,
- the letter of informed consent to be signed by the subjects or their parents/ guardians, and
- the copies of tests to be administered (if other than well-known standard tests).

Detailed guidelines concerning this proposal are available in the office of the chair of the Institutional Research Board (IRB). A report from the IRB should be attached to the final approved proposal. <https://lasierra.edu/irb/>

Only after receiving IRB approval of your proposal are you ready to begin collection of the data for the dissertation itself.

Dissertation Credits

You must register for a total of 12 credits of EDRS 798 Doctoral Dissertation, taking a minimum of one credit each quarter until you are finished. If you have registered for 12 credits of EDRS 798 but have not completed your research and successfully defended your dissertation, you are required to register for *SECE 910: Dissertation Continuation (1unit)* each quarter until your dissertation is completed and accepted. A modest fee accompanies this course, but regular tuition is not charged.

Leave of Absence

Occasionally a student may experience extenuating personal circumstances and may need to completely suspend their work the program for a time. In order to avoid the requirement for continuous registration during this time, the student must make a formal request to the department of specialization requesting such a leave of absence, which may last no more than two years. If approved, a leave of absence from the program means that the student may access no La Sierra University student privileges during this time, including faculty advice on academic work and access to library resources.

The Dissertation

A well-produced dissertation will demonstrate your familiarity with the literature pertinent to the topic, demonstrate your competence to conduct independent research and present a logically organized and readable account of the investigation, its findings, conclusions, and implications. It is expected to focus on a clearly defined problem of significant importance to the profession and employ acceptable, well-planned and executed research techniques.

Working with the Committee

The chair of your dissertation committee carries the primary responsibility for guiding the dissertation process and holds the prerogative of deciding when a draft copy is, or is not, ready for examination by the other members of the committee.

When your committee chair has approved a chapter or section, you are to submit that chapter or section to the other members of your committee for their review. After receiving their response, move on to the next chapter or section. It is generally advisable not to begin a new chapter of your dissertation until you resolve all questions on the previous chapter. If you have not received a response from your committee members within a reasonable period of time, consult with your committee chair. While the preferred method of dissertation development in the School of Education is chapter-by-chapter submission to the committee, your committee chair has the privilege of choosing another procedure with the consent of the committee.

In qualitative research, questions will continue to surface until the end of the study. Therefore, work on several chapters may proceed simultaneously.

Plan to pace your submissions to your committee chair and members. Professors should be given enough time to read and respond to your material thoughtfully.

Quantitative Dissertation – Recommended Format

The following contents are normally expected in a *quantitative* dissertation. The items to include and the location of the items within sections may vary. For more detailed descriptions regarding each section, refer to published guides to dissertation writing.

Front Matter

- Title page
- Research committee
- Permission statement
- Abstract
- Acknowledgments (optional)
- Dedication (optional)
- Table of contents
- List of tables, figures and illustrations

Chapter 1

Purpose and Organization

- Introduction and background of the study
- Statement of the problem
- Purpose of the study/significance of study
- Theoretical foundation
- Research questions and null hypotheses
- Limitations and delimitations

Assumptions and definition of terms
Organization of the document

Chapter 2

Review of Related Material

Introduction
Summaries and critiques of previous studies
Analysis of theories bearing on the studies
Unresolved issues, significant problems and unanswered questions requiring study
Evidence that the specific study proposed arises out of needs demonstrated in this chapter
And that the proposed study could fill in gaps or add to substantive or theoretical understanding
Summary

Chapter 3

Research Methodology

Introduction
Population and sample
Description of instruments(s)
Research procedures and time period of the study
How the data are to be analyzed to attain the objectives, test the hypotheses, or respond to the research questions of the study

Chapter 4

Results of the Data Analysis

Introduction
Results regarding the hypothesis(es) being investigated
Findings regarding interactions, if any, between the hypotheses or research questions
Relevant results and findings on matters not planned as part of the study but uncovered in the course of the investigation.
Summary

Chapter 5

Conclusions, Implications and Recommendations

Introduction
Discussion of conclusions drawn regarding the hypotheses or research questions as stated in Chapter 1. If there are interactions among some or all of the objectives, hypotheses, or research questions, these interactions are treated as separate topics.
Summary
Recommendations for further studies and policy issues

End Matter

Reference and notes
Appendices

Qualitative Dissertation – Recommended Format

Qualitative dissertations are field-focused and therefore allow the researcher to approach writing the dissertation with flexibility in format. For more detailed descriptions regarding each section, refer to published guides to dissertation writing.

Front Matter

- Title page
- Research Committee
- Permission Statement
- Abstract
- Acknowledgments (optional)
- Dedication (optional)
- Table of contents
- List of tables, figures and illustration

Chapter 1

Introduction

- Introduction and background of the study
- Research problem
- Purpose of the study
- Research question(s)
- Rationale for the study
- The researcher (background and relationship to problem discussed)
- Definition of terms (terms or phrases specific to your study)
- Summary

Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

- Broad historical literature on the topic
- Theoretical lens and related theoretical literature
- Literature (comprehensive) related to the topic
- Specific literature related to the current study
- Summary

Chapter 3

Methodology

- Description of qualitative research
- Description of the specific research approach (e.g., ethnography)
- Description of the study participants and setting
- Data collection procedures
- Ethical considerations
- Data analysis procedures
- Summary

Chapter 4

Presentation of the Findings

These chapters will present the findings in a manner appropriate to a given study. One or more chapters may be needed to present the study findings. Arguments will be well formed, insightful and grounded in the study. Theoretical arguments will be formed from the data and presented in a coherent and informative manner.

Final Chapter**Conclusion**

This chapter will present the conclusions drawn from the study, relate the findings to broader theoretical issues, critique the process used, and describe implications which could affect other similar studies.

End Matter

Reference and notes

Appendices

Form and Style

The School of Education Doctoral Dissertation Handbook must be used in conjunction with the current edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*. The APA Manual is to be followed in all matters of mechanics, style, citations, displaying of results, and references.

Unique to dissertation: no running head, table placement in text as soon as possible after first mention, numbering of tables by chapter (see ex. in Handbook p. 23), and no number on copyright page.

Format

Numbering of pages appearing before the first chapter is placed in the center of the footer in roman numerals, $\frac{3}{4}$ " from the bottom of the page, with the exception of the title page (no number). Arabic numerals 1" from the right hand edge in a $\frac{1}{2}$ " header start with the first page of CHAPTER 1. All chapters and sections begin 2" from the top of the page (see Handbook examples). Use all caps for the word CHAPTER and normal print for each chapter title (no bold or italics).

Labels of the different parts of the dissertation should be in bold letters, as is shown in the Handbook sample pages (i.e. **Abstract, Table of Contents, Appendices**, etc.)

Appendices are each preceded by a separate page labeled Appendix A, B, etc. and title of the appendix.

Production

Dissertations shall be produced using Microsoft Word. All dissertations are to be printed in black ink, using standard 12 point fonts, and using only one side of the page. Text must be clean, straight, and dark enough to be read and duplicated easily. Final copies must be laser printed.

Paper

All copies shall be produced on standard size 8-1/2" by 11" paper. For draft copies, use white bond of at least 20-pound weight. Final copies shall be run on high quality 20-pound bond paper.

Editorial Services

Your dissertation committee chair and committee members cannot serve as your writing coach or editor. While the Writing Center can provide some services to help with writing, your committee chair may require you to obtain the services of a copy editor to review your dissertation for errors of mechanics, grammar, style and other issues. You are responsible to pay the editor directly for time in working with you, copy editing and checking that your changes were made.

Final Form and Style Check

The Dissertation Secretary is responsible for ensuring conformity of the dissertation copy to the approved form and style, and checking for typographical errors. A visit with the Dean's Assistant as you begin writing your dissertation will alert you to possible problems and fee rates. Once you have defended your dissertation successfully and made the changes noted by your committee, and once your chair has signed off that the changes have been made, you are required to submit your dissertation to the Dissertation Secretary and to pay the fees for this final check prior to clearance for graduation. Final acceptance of your dissertation requires the Dissertation Secretary's signoff and notification to the Dean's Assistant.

Defending the Dissertation

The dissertation defense is a required component of the doctoral program of study. Once your dissertation is completely written in proper form and style, your committee will confer before giving final approval for you to orally defend your dissertation. A preparatory meeting with your committee chair is a requirement prior to the defense.

The defense has two purposes. The first is to evaluate whether you understand and can present the research questions, methodology, findings and implications of the research to an audience of professionals and respond fluently to scholarly questions related to the research. The second purpose is to evaluate your ability to clearly and convincingly communicate the results of your research to a broad group of interested faculty and students. The oral presentation and examination should be a stimulating academic experience for you.

Final Completion Steps

1. Completed copy to committee

In order to complete the process for a June graduation, you must submit a copy of the dissertation and abstract, complete in every respect, including all chapters completely edited with all appendices, references, charts, and tables numbered and complete *prior to the end of winter quarter*.

2. Abstract

Included with this completed copy must be an abstract of no more than 350 words. This size limitation is a constraint imposed by University Microfilms, Inc. that is accepted by U.S. universities and colleges for dissemination of research reports. It is an absolute limit. Count every word, beginning with the first paragraph.

The abstract you submit for publication will be printed on your oral defense program. This is the only written document that many of those present will see. Be sure that the abstract is well written and accurately represents the most important points of your study.

3. Committee approval

Your committee meets to determine when your dissertation is “ready to defend.” If your dissertation is approved for defense, the committee chair will confer with the Dean to set a defense date.

4. Defense scheduled

The dean’s office will establish the date for your oral defense. The School of Education reserves the right to schedule defenses according to time and faculty availability. Your department will send out the notifications of your defense to the campus.

5. The Defense

Planning for the Defense

You are strongly encouraged to attend other dissertation defenses in advance of your own, so that you are familiar with the atmosphere, components and flow of the defense.

Plan your presentation well in advance. This will be your opportunity to demonstrate to a larger academic community the effort that has resulted in a quality product, your dissertation. Your degree of familiarity with the contents of your dissertation must be thorough enough to defend your method, explain any of the

findings, and satisfactorily describe and explain the analyses. Prepare to articulate clearly how your conclusions and recommendations are based on study findings.

Meet with your Committee Chair for an orientation to the defense procedures. Review your defense presentation with your committee chair and use your chair's input to improve your planned presentation.

Prepare well-designed visuals to accent or emphasize selected points in your presentation. Create visuals that are meaningful, support the major themes of your presentation, and are easily readable for all present (for example, do not try to cram many points on each slide in small font). Visuals made by copying pages directly from the dissertation usually do not make effective visuals. It is wise to consult with resources that provide recommendations for effective visual presentations.

Finally, rehearse your oral presentation so that you know how it sounds and how many minutes it will take. Your presentation should be planned for 30-45 minutes and should include the following points:

1. Introduction

Describe the problem. Indicate your relationship to the problem and the development of your interest in that problem.

2. Statement of the Problem

Provide an overview of the literature basis for understanding the current state of the problem. Refer to the theoretical construct(s) that are related to your study.

3. Study Method

Define your population and sample. Indicate the type of study and explain why you chose this method. Explain the development or use of research materials. Discuss any limitations and strategies used to overcome those limitations. Explain why you utilized the research method that you did.

4. Study Findings

Provide data that answer each research question or hypotheses. Do not provide all of the data from your study. Select the most significant and/or most interesting findings for your presentation.

5. Study Conclusions

Provide meaning to the findings; do not simply restate the findings. Provide your ideas about what your findings contribute to the field of education and/or psychology, and how they are related to your theoretical basis for the study. Suggest recommendations for schools, districts, and other researchers. Indicate what your intended role will be in disseminating this information.

Procedures for Defense

It is important to keep in mind that passing the oral defense is not a routine matter. Unacceptable performance will mean a minimum delay of one quarter before a reexamination can occur. Prepare carefully.

Participation and observation of the oral defense is limited to La Sierra University faculty members and La Sierra University graduate students, and to individuals with relevant professional or scholarly interest as agreed to by the chair of the dissertation committee. Up to two family members may attend the defense with the permission of the dean. Recording devices are prohibited at the defense.

Normally two hours are scheduled for the oral defense in order to provide the examining committee evidence of your ability to defend your study and the document. Committee members bring written questions based on their review and reading. As the examination progresses, other questions usually emerge.

The following typifies the sequence and times for the oral defense:

1. **Dean's Welcome and Prayer** (*2 minutes*): The Dean welcomes the assembled group and opens with prayer.
2. **Introduction** (*5 minutes*): The committee chair introduces participants and explains procedures.
3. **Candidate presentation** (*25-40 minutes*): The candidate presents the dissertation research to the dissertation committee and other attendees.
4. **Questions** (*30-45 minutes*): The questioning phase of the defense is moderated by the committee chair. The first round of questions consists of questions from the dissertation committee. The second round of questions consists of follow-up questions from the dissertation committee. The remaining attendees, beginning with other School of Education faculty members, will then be invited to question the candidate. The committee chair will moderate all rounds of questioning.
5. **Executive session**: Once the questioning is finished, the committee chair will invite the candidate and attendees who are not members of the dissertation committee to leave the room, and the dissertation committee will meet in executive session. During the executive session the committee takes a vote on the candidate's ability to defend the dissertation.

Regarding the oral defense, the committee has the following three options.

- To approve the defense
- To reject the defense with opportunity for another defense or
- To reject the defense with no option for a further defense.

Regarding the dissertation document, the committee will choose from one of the following four options:

- To approve the document as presented
- To approve the document subject to minor revisions
- To approve the document subject to major revisions
- To reject the dissertation presented

After the Defense

A successful defense generally results in requiring you to make certain minor adjustments in your dissertation. Plan to make these revisions as soon as possible so as to allow for the remaining review and approvals by the committee and the dissertation secretary.

6. Submission to Dissertation Secretary

Following successful defense, the final completed dissertation must be approved by the committee. Once that is done, submit the final copy, properly formatted and on final copy paper, to the Dean's Office. The Dissertation Secretary will review your final copy for compliance to form and style guidelines. If your dissertation contains minor errors you will be notified and expected to make the corrections. **Remember, the Dissertation Secretary is not your editor.** If substantive form and style errors are perceived, the Dissertation Secretary has the option to return the dissertation to you unread, and it will be your responsibility to resubmit at a later date.

6. Graduation

The following specified deadlines apply to those wishing to participate in the June graduation. These are absolute deadlines. Plan accordingly.

1. The last day for oral defenses in spring quarter is **April 30**.
2. The last date for submission of final completed copy of Dissertation to the Deans' Office is **May 31**.

Appendices

1. Sample Title Page
2. Sample Abstract Page
3. Sample Table of Contents
4. Sample List of Tables and Figures
5. Sample Approval Form
6. Sample Permission to Copy Form
7. Sample Agenda for Dissertation Approval
8. Student Request for Doctoral Committee

(Sample Title Page)

THE EFFECT OF PHONICS INSTRUCTION ON
(2" from top of page)
READING COMPREHENSION
(Singled space if title is three or more lines)

A Dissertation
(2" from top line of title)
Presented to

The Faculty of the School of Education
La Sierra University

In Partial Fulfillment
(3" from "A Dissertation")
Of the

Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

By
Ethel G. Goodwrite

January 2015
(1" from bottom of page)

(Sample Abstract Page)

Abstract

Determining Disability: Statute and School Practice

Matthew B. Perry

School of Education, La Sierra University

May 2015

Children with specific learning disabilities (SLD) represent the largest group served under special education statutes, making their identification in the public schools both significant as well as controversial. Though some researchers have argued that special education laws, which require the use of standardized test data to make determinations of SLD eligibility, are based on faulty theory, others claim that schools, the interpreters and implementers of these laws, generally ignore them. Considering these earlier studies, the current study proposed that a better measure of school practice as well as a more accurate depiction of the legal eligibility criteria would demonstrate that schools do use test data to make SLD determinations, and do so in a way that is compliant with the law. Reviewing a year's worth of test data and eligibility decisions from a large, diverse school district, the study found that the group identified by schools as SLD had significantly greater discrepancies between their intellectual ability and academic achievement, and demonstrated significantly greater need for special education than the non-SLD group. When school decisions were compared against a three criteria eligibility model requiring necessary intelligence, discrepancy, and need, total school misclassification was at or below 15%. Rather than ignoring test data and legal guidelines, schools appear to use them to make SLD determinations. The recommendation to change identification guidelines, therefore, cannot be based on the claim that schools were unable to follow the original ones.

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Note: These figures represent ones placed at the end of a document. When connected to different chapters, they are numbered like the tables: Figure 3.1, Figure 3.2; Figure 4.1, Figure 4.2, Figure 4.3, etc.

(sample Approval Form)

This dissertation has been accepted by the faculty of the School of Education, La Sierra University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree, Doctor of Education.

RESEARCH COMMITTEE

Signatures

Dissertation Chair	Dr. Linda B. Reader	_____
Member	Dr. James P. Methodologist	_____
Member	Dr. Marilyn M. Monitor	_____
Member	Dr. External L. Scholar	_____

Approved by the Committee

Date: _____

(sample Permission Form)

I hereby grant permission to the School of Education, La Sierra University, to reproduce this research in part or in full for professional purposes, with the understanding that in no case will it be used for financial profit to any person or institution.

Signature _____

Date _____

Dissertation Proposal Approval Meeting

Tentative Agenda

1. Greetings, Introductions & Prayer (+/- 5 minutes)
2. Student's Informal Presentation (+/-30 minutes)
 - a. Why this topic is important to _____ and to the educational enterprise (+/- 10 minutes)
 - b. What she/he has found out from reading other research reports (+/- 10 minutes)
 - c. What her/his dissertation research will add to the body of literature (+/- 5 minutes)
 - d. The methodology that she/he plans to use and why it was selected (+/- 15 minutes)
3. Questions & Answers / Discussion (+/-40 minutes)
 - a. Is the research design satisfactory?
 - b. Are there aspects of the methodology that need to be adjusted?
 - c. Are there sections of the proposal that need to be changed?
4. Decision (+/-15 minutes)
 - a. Approval - Proceed with data collection and analysis?
 - b. Approval with minor adjustments – Proceed with data collection and analysis with the understanding that some aspects of the research will be revised?
 - c. Remand – Upgrade the proposal and the committee will meet again?
5. Verify IRB approval request
6. Committee members sign Proposal Approval Document

La Sierra University
School of Education
Student Request for Dissertation Committee

(Please print clearly)

Name _____

Address _____

Phone () _____ E-mail address: _____

Department: EDAD____ EDCI____ EDPC____

Proposed dissertation topic:

Requested Dissertation Committee Members:

✓ (For external member, include contact information and mailing address)

Chair: _____

Member: _____

Member: _____

External Member: _____

Position: _____

Contact information: _____

Department Chair's Signature: _____ Date _____

Dean's Approval Signature: _____ Date _____

**After completing this form, return it to
Dean's Office
La Sierra University School of Education
Riverside, California 92515**