

Dissertation Guide for Doctoral Candidates in the Annette Caldwell Simmons School of Education and Human Development Southern Methodist University

Prepared by the Doctoral Committee

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1 Timeline for Completion of Forms

In order to begin working on your dissertation, several tasks need to be completed and forms need to be filed. Once you have passed all portions of your written and/or oral comprehensive exams, you are eligible to be advanced to candidacy. In order to be considered for candidacy, both you and your dissertation committee chair must agree that you are ready to file papers for graduation and will complete the proposed dissertation before the deadlines set by the Annette Caldwell Simmons School of Education and Human Development (ACSSEHD). Please note that *it is not the responsibility of the dissertation chair to make sure that you file all forms and complete all milestones on time*. In the event that you miss a deadline for a specified graduation, you will need to re-file forms for the next proposed scheduled graduation.

In order to begin work on your dissertation, you must complete the following:

1. Pass all comprehensive examinations as required by your area of specialization.
2. File a completed Program of Studies Form with the chair of the Doctoral Committee (http://smu.edu/education/teachereducation/graduate/Program_of_Studies.pdf).
3. Once you have established your dissertation committee, you need to file an Establishment of Examination Committee Form (http://smu.edu/education/teachereducation/graduate/phd_forms.asp) with the chair of the Doctoral Committee.
4. Complete and file the “Ph.D. Qualifying Examination Report” form (http://smu.edu/education/teachereducation/graduate/phd_forms.asp) after having defended your major area paper, all comprehensive exams, and your proposal defense.

2 Types of Dissertations

In order to meet the demands of different departments within the ACSSEHD, the doctoral committee has voted to allow two separate types of dissertation: the traditional dissertation and the “three articles” dissertation. This guide is meant to give you a general conceptual understanding of the two types of acceptable dissertations in the ACSSEHD. However, it is up to the discretion of your dissertation committee chair and your dissertation committee as to the actual structure of your dissertation.

2.1 The Traditional Dissertation

The format of the traditional dissertation typically follows a five chapter structure.

- Chapter 1 - Introduction/Statement of the Problem
- Chapter 2 - Literature Review

- Chapter 3 - Research Methodology
- Chapter 4 - Discussion of Research Findings
- Chapter 5 - Conclusions and Recommendations

2.2 The Three Articles Dissertation

The format of the “three articles” dissertation will also follow a five chapter structure with Chapter 1 and Chapter 5 remaining relatively the same.

- Chapter 1 - Introduction
- Chapter 2 - Manuscript 1
- Chapter 3 - Manuscript 2
- Chapter 4 - Manuscript 3
- Chapter 5 - Conclusions and Recommendations

In this format, the “Introduction” serves as a vehicle for the student to identify common themes across all three manuscripts as well as the identification of research that spawned the development of the manuscripts. The last chapter would follow a typical traditional dissertation where the student will identify limitations (and delimitations) of the study as well as recommendations for future research.

3 Proposal Defense

Once your dissertation chair agrees you are ready to defend your proposal, you must schedule a meeting with the other committee members to schedule a defense of your dissertation proposal. The proposal defense process is in five stages.

1. Selection of an approved topic by the doctoral student and committee chair.
2. Writing a proposal to conduct research on the proposed topic with detailed information on the statement of the problem(s) being addressed, background literature, and research methodology. This proposal should be submitted to the dissertation committee no less than *2 weeks* before the scheduled proposal defense.
3. Passing an oral examination based on the submitted proposal consisting of a brief presentation in which the student will give an adequate overview of the proposal followed by a period of open questioning by the dissertation committee.
4. Revisions are made to the initial presentation and the final proposal is submitted to the committee for approval. Candidates are to make revisions based on agreed upon areas identified in the proposal defense. Students are to return all proposal corrections to the committee chair within 1 week of the proposal defense. Committee members will return any final corrections within a period no longer than 1 week from when the corrections are remitted. Although most changes to the proposal are assumed to be minor, and major substantive changes must be approved by the entire committee.
5. Complete and file the “Ph.D. Examination Report Form” (http://smu.edu/education/teachereducation/graduate/phd_forms.asp) after having defended your dissertation proposal defense.

4 Preparing the Dissertation for Committee Review

Before you begin working on your dissertation, the committee strongly recommends that you read through this dissertation handbook. It is also strongly recommended that you attend the dissertation workshop offered by the Office of Graduate Studies through Information Technology Services (ITS) at <http://www.smu.edu/its/classes>. Your dissertation may be in either Microsoft Word or L^AT_EX format, but still must adhere to all formatting requirements of the *6th Edition of the APA Publication Manual*.

Due to the strength of searchability and the relative ease in which other researchers would be able to access your work, the committee requires that doctoral candidates submit their dissertations to the ACSSEHD as an electronic document rather than a bound paper copy. This makes your dissertation cost less and aids in distribution and access. Students should submit their dissertation to UMI ETD Administrator at <http://www.etdadmin.com/cgi-bin/school?siteId=49>.

5 Oral Defense of the Dissertation

The student must contact his/her dissertation committee at least one month prior to scheduling his/her defense. In addition to scheduling the defense, the doctoral student must also make an electronic copy of the dissertation available to the committee at least two weeks before the defense date.

Students are encouraged to discuss strategies for preparation with their committee prior to the dissertation defense. The committee may meet separately at the beginning of the oral defense to exchange comments or expectations before including the student in the oral defense. The committee will judge the acceptability of the written dissertation and typically require revisions of portions of the dissertation. If the revisions are extensive, the dissertation chair may be required to sign approval of changes before the dissertation is finally approved. The committee will complete a written Ph.D. Examination Report Form upon the successful completion of the oral defense.

The oral defense follows a 30-30-30 format. The first 30 minutes are devoted to a student presentation of the dissertation findings. The student should work closely with the dissertation chair as to how and what should be presented during this time. During the second 30 minutes, the student will receive questions from the dissertation committee. In the final 30 minutes, the discussion is opened up to the full audience. During the defense, students are allowed to provide beverages for the attendees if they should choose, but food of any type is not allowed.

The Ph.D. degree is conferred at the end of the semester in which all forms are completed. The student may, if they choose, attend the graduation ceremonies held in the following May.

6 Advancement to Graduation

Once the student has successfully defended the dissertation, the following tasks must be completed in order to advance to graduation:

1. Complete and file the “ACSSEHD Application for Candidacy to Graduate” checklist at (http://smu.edu/education/teachereducation/graduate/phd_forms.asp). Note that this will probably be a form you complete before you actually defend your dissertation. ACG forms are typically due in late September and early February for Fall and Spring graduation, respectively.
2. Complete and file the “Ph.D. Examination Report Form” (http://smu.edu/education/teachereducation/graduate/phd_forms.asp).
3. Complete electronic submission of dissertation through <http://www.etdadmin.com/cgi-bin/school?siteId=49>.
4. Submit all information necessary for graduation before deadlines set by the SMU.
5. In order to be considered for Fall graduation, a student must successfully defend the dissertation before November 15. For Spring graduation, the dissertation must be successfully defended before April 1.