

DISSERTATION GUIDELINES

The dissertation expands understanding of a social problem. It demonstrates the candidate's ability to conduct independent research and to make an original contribution to the field. In consultation with their dissertation chair, candidates should choose to organize their dissertation manuscript as either a book (see Conventional Model) or as a collection of three articles (see Three Paper Model). The candidate should note the preferred model in the dissertation proposal, if possible. All decisions about the format of the dissertation should be made in conjunction with the dissertation chair. The inclusion of research that was undertaken prior to defense of the dissertation proposal is permissible with explicit committee approval prior to the dissertation proposal defense. The research must be substantially the student's own, and must be judged as such by the dissertation committee. The following offers *guidance* on how each model can be organized; however, models can be adjusted by chairs as needed.

CONVENTIONAL MODEL

The Conventional Model should build upon the dissertation proposal and include the following:

Front Pages: Candidates must follow the templates provided by the Graduate Center. The format for the Title Page, Copyright Page, Signature Page, Abstract, Acknowledgements, and Table of Contents are available at <http://libguides.gc.cuny.edu/dissertations>.

Introduction: The introductory chapter includes a clear statement of the research problem; presents a convincing argument for the significance of the problem; provides a rationale for relevance of the research topic to social welfare knowledge base, practice, and/or policy; and articulates the research questions and/or hypotheses. In addition, the introduction should provide a brief overview of each chapter of the dissertation.

Literature Review: The literature review demonstrates a comprehensive understanding of the problem and relevant practice or policy interventions through synthesis of current and seminal academic literature. Avoid a strictly chronological presentation of the literature and avoid writing a genealogy of your field's research. Focus on research directly related to your topic, which provides context for your research. Research methods employed in the studies cited should be examined and critiqued. The literature review should be clearly organized by problem, practice, or policy concepts. Identify gaps in the literature.

Theoretical Concepts: Theoretical concepts can be addressed in a stand-alone chapter or combined within the literature review. This section should identify at least one theory that served as the conceptual basis for the dissertation or that can provide sensitizing concepts for inquiry.

Methodology: This chapter should provide a detailed description of the dissertation methodology and justify the selection of the research approach in relation to the research questions. It should present the case for the selection of the proposed methods. For qualitative or mixed-method inquiry, the candidate should specify the tradition and rationale for its selection. The chapter should describe the research design, sources of data, data collection methods, instrumentation/measures, and analytic techniques. Mixed-methods or qualitative dissertation

studies should also note the author's positionality. All methodology chapters should include human subjects protection issues and the analytic strategy the candidate employed.

Findings/Results: Candidates present the findings of their research in plain English accompanied by supporting data, such as statistics or narrative interview excerpts. For quantitative results, the findings/results section should refer readers of to your hypotheses and note whether your results confirm or do not confirm the hypotheses and the behaviors measured or operations performed. Tables and graphs are encouraged where appropriate. For qualitative results, candidates should restate the research question(s) and provide a full and detailed narrative as well as excerpts from your data.

Discussion/Conclusion: This section should discuss the meaning and implications of the findings/results for social welfare knowledge, practice, and policy. Findings/results should be interpreted; hypotheses and/or research questions evaluated; and unexpected results discussed. Discuss how the results/findings of your study relate to the existing literature, how it extends that literature, and the contributions it makes to the field.

References: All references cited in the body of the dissertation must be included in the Reference section and must conform to the American Psychological Association (APA) Style Guide, Sixth Edition.

Appendices (optional): Appendices include significant information that would be distracting if included the main body of your dissertation, such as survey questions, assessment tools, glossaries, HRRP documents, etc.

Notes on Page Length: Page length will vary by dissertation study. Chapters typically range from 10-20 double-spaced pages. The introduction and conclusion are typically shorter in length.

Notes on Formatting: The APA Style Guide, Sixth Edition, must be used for formatting the body of the document.

*Also see notes on *Authorship for Conventional & Three Paper Models* below.

THREE PAPER MODEL

The three-paper model comprises three separate papers or articles of normal, discipline-specific, journal length that would be considered publishable as research manuscripts in peer reviewed scientific or professional journals. The independence of the three papers reflects the fact that the articles may be read and understood without reference to one another; nevertheless, the papers must support an overarching research theme as outlined in the dissertation proposal.

At least two of the three articles must be based on student analysis of data, whether quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods. A conceptual, theoretical, or methodological article is acceptable as a third paper, but it must closely align with the overall topic of the dissertation. A literature review or synthesis is not acceptable for the third paper, as relevant literature should be critically

appraised within the papers; however, systematic reviews and meta-analyses are permissible.

The inclusion of research that was undertaken prior to defense of the dissertation proposal is permissible, however only with explicit committee approval prior to the dissertation proposal defense. In rare cases, students may submit papers from the Three Paper Model to refereed scholarly journals before the final dissertation defense with permission from the chair. A manuscript's acceptance for publication does not preclude the chair or committee members from requiring additional modifications to the manuscript for inclusion in the final dissertation.. As with the conventional dissertation model, research must be substantially the student's own and must be judged as such by the dissertation committee. Contributions made to the dissertation by others should be clearly acknowledged in the body of the dissertation (see Notes on Authorship).

The Three Paper Model should build upon the dissertation proposal and include the following:

Front Pages: Candidates must follow the templates provided by the Graduate Center. The format for the Title Page, Copyright Page, Signature Page, Abstract, Acknowledgements, and Table of Contents are available at <http://libguides.gc.cuny.edu/dissertations>.

Chapter 1: Introduction and Background to the General Topic Area

The introductory chapter provides an overview of the three-paper dissertation. It introduces the research theme and conceptual basis; establishes the social welfare importance of the problem under study; states the primary research questions and hypotheses; introduces methodological approaches; highlights and contextualizes salient findings; and briefly describes policy and practice implications. The specific aims and hypotheses of the dissertation must be included in this chapter.

Chapter 2: First Paper

Chapter 3: Second Paper

Chapter 4: Third Paper

Chapter 5: Summary of Results, Conclusions, Key Strengths and Limitations, and Implications for Social Welfare Knowledge, Policy and/or Practice

The concluding chapter establishes the individual and collective contribution of the three articles to the student's area of inquiry. It discusses future research opportunities arising from the dissertation's development of the topic; it also details the social welfare relevance of findings in terms of policy and practice. In addition, critical discussion of key strengths and limitations of the research as it relates to the main findings across the three manuscripts must be included.

References: All references cited in the body of the dissertation must be included in the Reference section using APA Style Guide, Sixth Edition

Appendices (optional): Additional methodological detail, analyses or results synthesis conducted by the student or required by the committee (e.g., tables, figures, summaries, sub-analyses, sensitivity analyses etc.) that is necessary for the dissertation, but not appropriate or too

detailed for a journal article of normal length, should be included in the dissertation as appendices. In addition, appendices may include significant information, such as survey questions, assessment tools, glossaries, HRRP documents, etc.

Notes on Page Length: The three papers must conform to the format of a typical scholarly journal in the field, and be of normal length (depending on the target journal). Page length of the first (introductory) and last (summary) chapters will vary by dissertation, but typically range from 5-15 double-spaced pages.

Notes on Formatting: The APA Style Guide, Sixth Edition is recommended for formatting. Style should be discussed and approved by Chair prior to submission of the dissertation.

AUTHORSHIP FOR COVENTIONAL AND THREE PAPER MODELS

Independence: Regardless of model, the dissertation must be substantially the student's own work and must be judged as such by the dissertation committee/examiners.

Co-authorship on Manuscripts Submitted for Publication. In no cases should co-authorship be expected or assumed by dissertation committee members. Students may invite dissertation committee members or external mentors to co-author a given paper from their dissertation, but the student must assume the role of first author on all manuscripts submitted for publication. The responsibilities assumed of first author typically include: synthesis of the relevant literature, development of the major thesis, research question(s) and hypotheses; selection of an appropriate research design; development or adaptation of a conceptual model or framework; survey design and data collection (where applicable); data management, analysis, and interpretation of results; preparation of major parts of manuscripts.

To be considered a co-author on a manuscript submitted for publication, faculty co-authors must contribute sufficiently to warrant co-authorship. Judgment of the potential contribution of co-authors can be made by the student in consultation with the dissertation sponsor, another committee member, or someone external to the dissertation committee.