TRIDENT UNIVERSITY
INTERNATIONAL

PH.D. DISSERTATION HANDBOOK

GLENN R. JONES COLLEGE OF BUSINESS
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
COLLEGE OF HEALTH SCIENCES

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION TO THE PH.D. DISSERTATION HANDBOOK

The Ph.D. Dissertation Handbook is designed to make the process of writing proposals and dissertations rigorous, yet as efficient as possible. It does not, however, constitute a contract between students and Trident University International. Nothing in this guide is intended to alter the admission or graduation requirements of a program as published in the official University Catalog. Trident University reserves the right to update or amend this guide at any time according to Trident University Ph.D. program needs, accreditation requirements, and/or ProQuest publication changes.

The dissertation is a requirement for earning a Ph.D., the highest academic degree available. It also provides a permanent record of original research. Trident University is committed to the preservation and dissemination of this research.

The first section of this guide provides a general overview of degree requirements and policies. The subsequent sections address dissertation requirements, procedures, and responsibilities of the Committee Chairperson, members, and mentors. The guidelines for writing, formatting, and publishing the dissertation are contained in the separate Dissertation Publication Guide.

DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

The degree requires a total of 56 semester hours of coursework. Following the completion of the coursework, students will continue to work on their dissertation in the 700-level courses.

DISSERTATION TIMELINE

All Doctoral/Ph.D. degree requirements must be fulfilled within nine consecutive years. The time to complete the dissertation courses for doctoral students may not exceed three years without written approval by the Director of the Ph.D. program and/or College Dean. Students are strongly encouraged to complete the Ph.D. degree within their three-, four-, or five-year track, based on their Academic Plan (AP). Please review the University Catalog for more information on program requirements and the policy related to maximum time to degree.

GRADING

To meet graduation requirements, doctoral students must receive a minimum grade of “B” in all 600-level courses.

A passing grade in 700 to 702 courses requires, at a minimum, the following:

1. Communicate with the dissertation chair at least once every two weeks.
2. Submit progress into your 700/800 course (check requirements by program).
3. Complete the progress report at the end of the session.
4. A student meeting the above expectations will receive a “P” grade. Students who fail to meet these expectations for the course will receive a “NP” (No Pass) grade

and will have to repeat the course. Students are allowed to repeat the course only twice.

A passing grade in 703 and above courses requires at a minimum the submission of an updated proposal/dissertation draft, and submission of the progress report.

The final grade for 700-level courses is “P” (pass) or “NP” (no pass).

Progress in the 800-level courses is not graded; however, progress is evaluated by the mentor, Chairperson, or Program Director.

Ph.D. students may repeat and cancel dissertation series courses (700 to 702) up to two times.

Based on the nature of the program and courses, dissertation courses are not eligible for extensions.

All course materials are available to students through Trident's Online Library or open access in the Internet. In addition, Ph.D. students are required to purchase the SPSS statistical software package.

PROCTORING DISSERTATION DEFENSE

In accordance with the Bureau for Private Postsecondary Education (BPPE), a final dissertation defense in which a doctoral student is not physically present on site must be proctored. This will confirm the identity of the student, and that the student did not receive prompting and/or have access to materials that are not

allowed during the evaluation period. Students can use a remote doctoral Committee member at a distance site as a proctor for any oral evaluations.

In the event that a Committee member cannot be physically present for an oral evaluation, it is the responsibility of the doctoral student to obtain a proctor for their Dissertation Proposal and Dissertation Defense. Students must complete the External Proctor form two weeks in advance, and receive their Program Director's approval prior to the date of the evaluation. Proctors cannot be a relative of the student and all proctoring expenses are the responsibility of the student.

Approved proctors include the following:

- A testing center or academic administrator of a regionally accredited university or college
- A testing center on a military installation
- A librarian
- Online proctoring service (e.g., proctoru.com)

NOTE: The student is responsible for all charges incurred from the use of proctors. This is a requirement for all students who started the program after Fall 2015.

DISSERTATION REQUIREMENTS

Trident University Ph.D. programs require a five-chapter dissertation format. Through their dissertation, students must demonstrate a synthesis of their doctoral study, knowledge, and scholarship with a significant research project that

contributes to general principles of knowledge in the field(s) potentially affected by the research.

METHODOLOGY TYPES FOR DISSERTATIONS

Two types of dissertations are widely accepted in the Ph.D. programs at Trident University: 1) Quantitative and 2) Mixed Methods. Each student should consult with their Ph.D. Program Director and Dissertation Chair for approval on use of Qualitative Methodology alone in the dissertation. An overview of the aforementioned methodologies is highlighted below.

QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Quantitative research methodology focuses on generating quantitative data via statistical analyses of data sets, questionnaires/surveys, structured interviews, or structured observations. The research design can consist of, but is not limited to, the following: 1) descriptive, 2) experimental, and 3) quasi-experimental research design. Furthermore, the research design is meant to address the research questions and test hypotheses/null hypotheses. The results also must be analyzed in terms of reliability and validity. Findings that address each research question and hypothesis are presented in tables, graphs, and charts, as well as subsequently discussed in the context of the literature. Please see the resource section for further details on quantitative research methodology.

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Qualitative research methodology generates data via some of the following: interviews, focus groups, and participant observations. The research approaches

can consist of grounded theory, phenomenological research, narrative research, ethnographies, and case study research. Findings for qualitative research studies are presented through case studies and narratives with themes identified to help address the research questions. Please see the resource section for further details on Qualitative research methodology.

MIXED METHODS RESEARCH

Mixed methods often refers to a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches. At times, qualitative is done first as part of an exploratory study for major themes, and then quantitative research is used to further understand the relationship. Please see the resource section for further details on mixed methods research.

DISSERTATION CHAPTERS

While there is no single set of steps that characterizes all dissertations, there are elements and procedures that are common to most Ph.D. programs.

Trident's Ph.D. programs require the traditional "five-chapter" dissertation that typically includes the following chapters:

I. Introduction

II. Review of the Literature

III. Methodology

IV. Results

V. Discussion and Conclusion

The candidate will write descriptive chapters for each element of the research. The complete written dissertation will comprise the sum of these chapters. Reasonable flexibility is allowed and encouraged to meet specific needs of each dissertation, but the majority of dissertations will follow this chapter outline. The first three dissertation chapters will draw heavily on the approved dissertation proposal, although the chapters need to be revised to reflect changes that take place in the project between its approval and its completion (including issues as simple as changing the tenses from future to past, in most cases). Significant modifications of the general content need to be approved by the Chair and the Committee.

CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION, PROBLEM STATEMENT, AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This chapter will introduce the general topic and explain why the candidate chose it. This chapter will also identify the specific issue or problem in the topic that will be the subject of the research, and define the research questions that guide the study. The candidate should explain the process that led him/her to this specific issue or problem. There should be adequate references in this chapter to the literature to justify the selection and relevancy of the issue or problem.

CHAPTER 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, the candidate will include all relevant literature to fully develop any theoretical background and conceptual framework necessary to conduct and discuss the research. This chapter will describe the current state of research related to the issue or problem. The formal hypotheses are generally

introduced and discussed in this chapter, since they should be based on the literature.

CHAPTER 3 – METHODOLOGY

The candidate will describe in detail the specific methodology to be used to conduct the research and will justify that selection. Any instruments or tools to be used will also be fully described and justified in this chapter. If preliminary tests were indicated, the tests will be fully described, the results explained, and any modifications resulting from them discussed. The nature of the research site(s), the sampling arrangements, and the procedures followed in the research are also covered in this chapter. The candidate will describe any statistical tests and/or other analytical procedures used in the analysis of the data collected. The selection of the statistical tests and/or other analytical procedures will be justified.

CHAPTER 4 – DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Here, the candidate will apply the statistical tests and/or analytical procedures established in Chapter 4 to the data, and draw conclusions as to the fate of his/her hypotheses or research questions. Complete results will be described, and support or rejection of the hypothesis (es) will be described and explained.

CHAPTER 5 – DISCUSSION

In this final chapter, the candidate will discuss the findings in relation to the research questions, and explain the implications of the research, including a clear description of the implications for theory and the addition to the body of knowledge

in the issue or problem area; recommendations for further research are almost always included, and recommendations for practice are highly desirable.

DISSERTATION PROCEDURES

Trident University International has an electronic infrastructure called the Doctoral Positioning System (DPS). The DPS is a web-based technology used for the administration, documentation, tracking, and evaluation of progress toward completing all the tasks and milestones required to attain the Ph.D. degree at Trident.

The DPS is composed of 600-, 700-, and 800- level courses, and an ePortfolio.

DPS COMPONENTS:

a. 600-level courses are research methods and theory courses. They are core, concentration, and elective courses valued at four credit hours.
b. Once all coursework has been completed, doctoral students will begin taking 700-level dissertation courses. There are two types of 700-level courses.
    i. **Dissertation series** (700-701-702) are valued at four credit hours. These courses require discussion participation, substantive progress in the dissertation tasks as submitted to the 800-level course, and submission (to the 700-level course) of the progress report via an eForm.

ii. **Dissertation continuation** courses (703 and above) are valued at zero credit hours. They require substantive progress in the dissertation tasks submitted to the 800-level course, and submission of the progress report via an eForm to the 700 course.

c. 800-level courses are the dissertation tasks courses created for each Ph.D. student as soon as they are registered in the program. The 800 course is valued at zero credit hours. It provides a single place to submit, track, and gain approval for completed dissertation tasks.

d. The e-Portfolio provides a single place to save documents related to the development of a student's dissertation over time. Students will be able to draw upon it to develop a portfolio of their best work to share with others both before and after graduation. All eForms are available in ePortfolio.

PH.D. PROGRAM MILESTONES

The Ph.D. program is divided into seven distinct milestones. All Ph.D. students must achieve the milestones presented below to earn the Ph.D. degree.

	Milestone	Associated Courses	Associated Tasks
1.	Doctoral Coursework	600s & 800	T1, T2, T3, T4, T5, T6
2.	Dissertation Committee Formation	RES620 / DEL700 / DHS700 & 800	T10
3.	Qualifying Exam	RES620 / DEL700 / DHS700 & 800	T7
4.	Dissertation Prospectus	699 & 800	T8
5.	Dissertation Proposal	700s, 800	T11, T12, T13, T14
6.	IRB	700s, 800	T9, T15, T16

7.	Final Dissertation	700s, 800	T17, T18, T19, T20

Program milestones include 20 dissertation tasks, which may have some variation depending on the respective Ph.D. program. These dissertation tasks represent a general approach that students must follow in the completion of their dissertation study. During coursework, students will be asked to make progress in the dissertation tasks as part of the assignments in their courses. At the end of the session, they will have to upload progress in the dissertation tasks into 800 courses. While in the dissertation phase in the 700 courses, students should record progress as the dissertation tasks are completed. It is important that students work closely with the dissertation mentor/Chairperson in order to advance smoothly through the process. Please also note that students advance through the dissertation process at different rates. Depending upon the kind of study, the various tasks could take longer or shorter periods of time for completion. Understanding these differences and maintaining flexibility in scheduling makes the process go smoother for the doctoral student and the mentor/Chairperson. At a minimum, doctoral students are expected to maintain bi-weekly communication with their Chairperson.

DISSERTATION TASKS

1. AP (Academic Plan)
2. Identify Area of Research and General Research Questions
3. State Research Questions
4. Draft of problem statement and introduction
5. Draft of literature review
6. Draft of research methodology
7. Qualifying Exam (Written and Oral)
8. Dissertation Prospectus
9. IRB Certificate
10. Committee formation
11. Draft of dissertation proposal
12. Final Proposal
13. Post-defense proposal with corrections
14. Approved Dissertation Proposal
15. IRB Application
16. IRB Approval (or exemption)
17. Draft of dissertation
18. Final Dissertation
19. Post-defense Dissertation with corrections
20. Approved Dissertation

Task 1: Academic Plan

The purpose of the Academic Plan (AP) is for the student to identify the academic plan of completion of the Ph.D. program in 3, 4, or 5 years. At the start of the Ph.D. program, the student needs to fill out the AP e-Form in the e-Portfolio, and upload it into the 800 course. The mentor will evaluate the content and mark progress. The student may update the AP form in latter sessions.

Task 2: Identify Area of Research and General Research Questions

When a student takes the first course in the program, he/she will begin to review literature and identify a general research topic of interest based on their interest, background, and academic goals. The student should follow the instructions stated in the courses. Substantive drafts should be posted into the 800-course dropbox. The mentor will evaluate and use the rubric to record progress and send feedback in the 800 course. The student can make revisions based on feedback.

Task 3: State Research Questions

As students continue in the program, they will narrow down their research questions as part of the course assignments. Students should follow the instructions stated in their courses. Substantive drafts should be posted into the 800-course dropbox. The mentor will evaluate and use the rubric to record progress and send feedback in the 800 course. Students can make revisions based on feedback.

Task 4: Draft of Problem Statement and Introduction

Students will continue to review literature and interact with their mentor on their own research; identify their study knowledge gap; and develop a draft of the problem statement and introduction. Students should follow the instructions stated in their courses. Substantive drafts should be posted into the 800-course dropbox. The mentor will evaluate and use the rubric to record progress and send feedback in the 800 course. Students can make revisions based on feedback.

Task 5: Draft of Literature Review

Students will continue to review literature and interact with their mentor on their own research. Students should follow the instructions stated in their courses. Substantive drafts should be posted into the 800-course dropbox. The mentor will evaluate and use the rubric to record progress and send feedback in the 800 course. Students can make revisions based on feedback.

Task 6: Draft of Research Methodology

Students will start describing the methodology section of their dissertation research when they take methodology courses. Students should follow the instructions stated in their courses. Substantive drafts should be posted into the 800-course dropbox. The mentor will evaluate and use the rubric to record progress and send feedback in the 800 course. Students can make revisions based on feedback.

Task 7: Qualifying Exam (Written and Oral)

The Qualifying Exam assesses the student's ability to conduct independent research. It includes both a written and an oral qualifying exam. Students will be examined on their understanding of research methods and statistical concepts related to the research process. The qualifying exam will be conducted (via phone conference or e-conference) after the student has finished all of the courses. Students will submit a written exam to the respective course (RES620 or DEL/DHS700 per course instructions), and upload it to the 800 course and e-Portfolio. The Qualifying Exam committee will evaluate it using the grading rubric, and schedule the oral exam. The written exam and the results of the qualifying exam will be uploaded to the 800 course and e-Portfolio by the student. Students will have up to two opportunities to take the qualifying exam.

Task 8: Dissertation Prospectus

Students will develop their dissertation prospectus in the 699 courses. The final version will be uploaded to the 800 course and e-Portfolio by the student. The mentor will evaluate the prospectus, and use the rubric to record progress and send feedback.

Task 9: IRB Certificate

All students are required to complete IRB training prior to their IRB application. Here is the training site at NIH Office of Extramural research: *http://phrp.nihtraining.com/users/login.php?l=3*. After finishing the training, the student should upload the certificate to the 800 course and e-Portfolio.

Task 10: Committee Formation

The student will select their Dissertation Chair and Committee members based on expertise and availability. All Committee members must be approved by the Program Director. Each Committee will consist of three faculty members, one of whom serves as Chair of the Committee. One member of the Committee must be external to Trident. The Chairperson and the Committee will be responsible for guiding the student during the dissertation process.

The student will provide the faculty names of dissertation Committee through the MS Word form available in e-Portfolio The student will upload the Committee information into a form of the e-Portfolio and 800. The student will also upload the resume of the external committee member.

Task 11: Draft of Dissertation Proposal

After the student's dissertation Committee is assembled, the student will work with the Committee on developing a proposal. The first objective of the Proposal Development is adddepth to the Prospectus approved in 699. The student should have written a substantial draft of the proposal, following the proposal rubric. The student should contact his/her Chair at least once biweekly to discuss the issues in the proposal. Substantive drafts of the working proposal will be uploaded to the 800-course dropbox, and the Chair will provide feedback within two weeks. The student addresses the issues and/or makes revisions accordingly. The final version submitted in the session will be evaluated by the Chair, using the proposal grading rubric in the 700 courses.

Task 12: Final Proposal

The Committee will review the student's dissertation proposal to ascertain that the student's knowledge, skills, and conceptual framework are sufficient for undertaking rigorous inquiry into the student's designated field. All three Committee members will review the dissertation proposal and determine if the proposal is ready for defense. If the proposal is ready for defense, the dissertation chair will schedule the oral defense.

The student should assemble a PowerPoint presentation describing the study and following the issues covered in the proposal, and send it to the Committee members prior to defense. This will serve as the basis and skeleton for the oral presentation.

Students will upload their final version of the proposal and PowerPoint slides to the 800-course dropbox and e-Portfolio.

Task 13: Post-Defense Proposal with Corrections

After the student's defense of the proposal, the Committee will meet and reach one of four conclusions:

- The proposal is approved by the Committee as presented (with minor adjustments only).
- The proposal is approved but with major adjustments. These adjustments must be reviewed and approved by all Committee members.

- The proposal will be approved only after significant restructuring. The proposal must be defended again after the restructuring; the second defense will be scheduled not earlier than two months after the first defense.
- The proposal is not accepted and the Committee will assist the student in preparing another proposal. A second defense will be scheduled, to occur not earlier than three months following the first defense.

The student will upload the post-defense corrections of the proposal to the 800 course and e-portfolio according to the Committee recommendations. The Committee Chair will review and provide feedback until all issues have been addressed. The Committee Chair will recommend to the Doctoral Program Director whether or not to approve the student's advancement to candidacy. The student will be asked to make revisions if any problems/issues have been found by the Program Director. The updated version also will be uploaded to the post-defense proposal corrections dropbox.

Task 14: Approved Dissertation Proposal

All corrections must be made within 30 days of the date of defense and posted again for review by the dissertation Chair. If the changes are not submitted within 30 days, the student must defend the proposal again. Proposal review by the Doctoral Program Director will be completed within two weeks from the Chair recommendation.

If the student cannot successfully defend the proposal, a second defense can be scheduled, not earlier than 30 days after the first defense. A dissertation

proposal may be defended up to three times. If a student fails the third defense, he/she must leave the program.

Once the Program Director approves the proposal, the student will upload it to the 800 course and e-portfolio. Only the Program Director will assign “Approved” in the 800 course.

After the dissertation proposal is approved, the student is advanced to Candidacy, which means that all requirements for the degree have been completed, except for the research dissertation itself.

All Ph.D. students should be aware of the following standard academic protocols. These protocols are rigorously respected and observed at Trident University. Prior to formal admission to candidacy, students should not refer to themselves as “doctoral candidates” or “Ph.D. candidates.” In a Ph.D. program, the term “candidate” has a very specific meaning, and students should be careful in using the term to refer to themselves. No Ph.D. student or candidate should ever use the initials Ph.D. after his/her name until all degree requirements have been met and the student is notified by the University that the degree has been conferred. The same is true for using the title “Dr.” or “Doctor.”

Students who have been admitted to candidacy should refer to themselves as “Ph.D. Candidate in Health Sciences (or Education or Business Administration), Trident University, expected date of completion 20xx.”

Students should not refer to themselves as “ABD” (“all but dissertation”) until they have been formally admitted to candidacy.

Task 15: IRB Application

Approval by the Doctoral Program Director largely completes the proposal phase of the dissertation. One final task required before the student may begin to collect and analyze data is the review and approval of the proposed study by the Trident University Institutional Review Board.

IRB review of all research involving human subjects is required by Federal law and regulations as well as established ethical theories and principles. To complete this review, the student gets an IRB application form from e-portfolio and submits the application to the 800 “IRB application” drop box. This application will summarize the project and the human subjects’ protection issues that it poses (a copy of the methodology discussion and other required forms and/or data gathering instruments should be attached to the application). The IRB Chair then makes the determination as to the nature and extent of the review. It is very important that students understand that they may not collect data before IRB approval is received, and if they do collect data before that approval, they may not use it in the dissertation.

Trident University has a standing committee known as the Institutional Review Board (IRB). This committee exists for the protection of human subjects and requires those students and faculty conducting research involving human subjects to submit their research proposals for review. Among other responsibilities, the charge of the IRB is to ensure adherence to federal, state, and local regulations as well as established ethical principles, including respect for persons, beneficence, and justice, as enunciated by the Belmont Report issued by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Respect for persons as an ethical principal includes an appreciation of persons as independent beings that are capable to voluntarily decide whether or not to choose to participate in research.

The IRB additionally addresses the issues of safeguarding individuals unable to make informed decisions, such as children or those not competent to understand the benefits or risks resulting from research. The IRB also considers procedures to ensure confidentiality of subjects. In research involving children, federal guidelines mandate the use of parental consent forms and assent forms for the minor. Beneficence regarding research is concerned with protecting subjects from harm and acting in the best interest of research subjects. In order to prevent harm, the IRB requires the researcher to carefully consider and analyze the risks and benefits of their study and then formally address them individually. The IRB Committee then has the responsibility to determine if these potential risks and benefits are clearly spelled out for both the Committee and potential subjects, and whether the research can be approved based upon the listed risks/benefits analysis.

Justice as an ethical principle to be considered in human subject studies refers to the fact that subjects have the right to be aware of the potential risks of research when they are asked to participate. It also asks the researcher to consider who or which group will benefit from the proposed research. The researcher needs to ensure that potential risks are not being taken by only one segment of the population for the benefit of other larger groups of individuals. Hospitals and other institutions where research is conducted may require further approval by their own internal IRB committees.

Please refer to the Trident University IRB website for additional information regarding IRB policies and procedures.

Task 16: IRB Approval

The student will upload the IRB approval letter or exception to the 800 course "IRB Approval" drop box and e-portfolio. Then, the student can begin to collect their data. Only the Program Director will assign "Approved" in the 800 course.

Task 17: Draft of Dissertation

The student will complete the dissertation as approved in the proposal. During this period, the student will set up regular meetings with the Chairperson to discuss the issues in the dissertation. Every draft of the dissertation will be uploaded to the 800-course drop box, and the Chair will provide feedback. The student will address the issues and/or makes revisions accordingly, and submit the dissertation to the 800-course drop box. The final version submitted in the session will be graded by the Chair.

The Committee Chair will provide supervision and assistance for the student. The other Committee members will provide feedback to the dissertation chair. Each session, the Chair will report to the Doctoral Program Director on the progress of the dissertation.

Task 18: Final Dissertation

The Committee will review the dissertation to ascertain that the data analysis and discussion are sufficient for undertaking rigorous inquiry into the student's designated field. All three Committee members will review the dissertation. A defense will be scheduled once the Committee assesses that the dissertation is ready. Any doctoral dissertation defense must be scheduled before the due date of Module 4 to give time for post-defense revisions and submission to Program Director and Dean for approval. Otherwise, the defense should be scheduled in the next session.

A PowerPoint presentation describing the study and following the issues covered in the dissertation should be assembled by the student and sent to the Committee members prior to the defense. This will serve as the basis and skeleton for the oral presentation.

The student will upload the final version of the dissertation and PowerPoint slides to the 800-course drop box and e-portfolio.

Task 19: Post-Defense Dissertation with Corrections

After the defense of the dissertation by the student, the Committee will meet and reach one of three conclusions:

- The dissertation is approved by the Committee as presented (with minor adjustments only).
- The dissertation is approved but with major adjustments. These adjustments must be reviewed and approved by all Committee members.

- The dissertation will be approved only after significant restructuring. The dissertation must be defended again after the restructuring; the second defense will be no earlier than two months following the first defense.

After the post-defense dissertation corrections have been completed, the Committee Chair will recommend approval the Doctoral Program Director. Any necessary revisions must be made within 30 days from the Program Director's review of the dissertation. The Committee Chair is responsible for the continued guiding of the student with the post-defense revisions. The student will upload the updated dissertation to the Post-Defense Dissertation with Corrections dropbox in the 800 course, and the e-portfolio.

Task 20: Approved Dissertation

Dissertations must be approved by the Committee, Program Director and Dean. All corrections must be made within 30 days of the date of defense. The student will upload the final approved dissertation to the 800 course and e-portfolio after the Program Director and Dean approves the dissertation. Only the Program Director will assign "Approved" in the 800 course.

The Registrar will start the degree audit (check) to make sure that all of the academic and other requirements have been met for this degree. The Registrar will send a degree completion letter to the student for submission to UMI.

Once the student receives the letter from the Registrar, the dissertation can be prepared for publication at ProQuest following their publication guidelines available at http://www.proquest.com/products-services/dissertations/submitting-

dissertation-proquest.html. ProQuest will provide more information to the student upon request. Trident's librarian can assist with this process if there are any questions.

The student will need to have three bound copies sent to Trident from ProQuest, addressed to our librarian and the Ph.D. Program Director. Copies may be sent directly to the Committee members. Upon receipt of these copies and confirmation of degree clearance, the degree and diploma will be awarded.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF DISSERTATION COMMITTEE

All Ph.D. Committee Chairs report to the Program Director and are subject to a quarterly assessment of student progress and Committee activities. The student/Chair/Committee relationship is one that can take many forms; there is no single pattern that uniquely characterizes successful relationships. Like all relationships, this one has ups and downs; thus, a summative evaluation of the relationship at some random point in time is neither possible nor helpful. The issue is much more one of formative evaluation and the key is creating a set of procedures whereby the parties themselves are encouraged to remain continuously aware of what is and what is not working and communicate about needed improvements.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF COMMITTEE CHAIR

While the responsibility for progress and completion of the dissertation is that of the student, the Chairperson will have the following specific responsibilities:

- Set up regular meetings with the chaired student.
- Provide guidance and supervision during the entire dissertation process.
- Provide timely first reviews of all elements of the research process.
- Provide feedback to student's Proposal/Dissertation via 800.

Topics of communication include:

- When the dissertation proposal or dissertation is ready for review.
- When an element is unacceptable and should be returned to the student without forwarding to the members.
- Specific constructive critique by the Chairperson, including inquiry into lack of acceptable progress.
- Forward Committee member comments to the student. Only the Chair communicates directly with the student. Committee members may not communicate directly with the student.
- Make logistical arrangements for the defenses of the proposal and completed dissertation, and forward copies of each document to the relevant parties.
- Serve as Chair for the proposal and completed dissertation defenses.
- Report results of the proposal and completed dissertation defenses to the Program Director.
- Schedule and serve as Chairperson for all meetings of the full dissertation Committee.

- Assign final grades for your students in 700-level courses every session.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF DISSERTATION COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

- Provide assistance and advice as needed to the Committee Chairperson.
- Review all dissertation elements forwarded by the Chair and respond with constructive critique.
- Attend and participate in the proposal and completed dissertation defenses conducted as conference calls.

APPENDIX A: PROPOSAL RUBRIC

TITLE PAGE

- Clearly identifies main constructs
- Lists Committee members

ABSTRACT

- A concise, brief, rational statement of what will be done in the study (no more than 350 words).

INTRODUCTION

- Presents the context and the knowledge gap, the study purpose, what will be done in the study, and how it will fill the knowledge gap.
- Should be brief, clear, and specific to the topic.
- Includes study feasibility.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

- Identifies the study as novel and significant.
- Clearly identifies the problem; addresses the knowledge gap, study significance, and novelty using evidence from the literature.
- The study purpose and aims stem clearly from the problem statement and knowledge gap.
- Must be clearly presented, focused, specific, and theory-based.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- Should be clear, articulated, and specific, corresponding exactly to the study purpose.
- Provide original insights to the issues.
- Be thought-provoking.
- Provide clear and compelling promise of contribution to discipline and/or communities.
- Clearly address the knowledge gap.
- Include main and sub questions, and be comprehensive in scope.
- Refer to the main constructs and their relationships (relationships to be investigated in the study).

LITERATURE REVIEW

- There is a relevant synthesis of empirical and theoretical literature.
- Critical understanding of literature is evident in style, organization, and content.
- Mastery of appropriate canon is evident. Sources cited are rich and diverse.
- Recent publications are utilized.
- The knowledge gap is clearly identified and discussed.
- The review is comprehensive in scope.

- Key issues are included. All the components of the research question(s) (main constructs and their associations) are addressed.
- Multiple citations from diverse literature are cogently woven together.
- The existing controversies or issues in the literature are reframed in novel terms.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

- The theory, theories, theoretical models, or mechanisms have been identified and are relevant to the research questions and associations under study.
- The concepts and the relationships among the constructs/variables are presented clearly and logically.
- The dependent variables and independent variables are clearly assigned in the conceptual framework, and there is clarity of directionality.
- A clear graphical presentation is provided.

HYPOTHESES

- Correspond to the research questions.
- Are relevant and flow logically from the theory used.
- Are accurately stated.
- Are testable based on operationalized variables.

METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH DESIGN

- Is accurately identified and described.
- Answers the study's hypotheses and is appropriate.
- Includes sufficient protection for human subjects.

STUDY POPULATION

- Populations have been identified and described (i.e., their identity, location, accessibility, etc.).
- Recruiting and sampling procedures have been identified.
- Power analysis and effect size have been calculated and are sufficient and correctly presented.

DATA COLLECTION TOOLS

- Measurement instrument and other appropriate tools are valid, reliable, and correctly presented.
- Plan for data collection and analysis is appropriate.

- Measures exist for all variables.

VARIABLES—INDEPENDENT AND DEPENDENT VARIABLES

- Operationalized variables are identified and discussed.
- Each variable is described based on type (nominal, continuous, etc.) and role in the analysis (Independent Variable/Dependent Variable).

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

- There is a correspondence between the research questions, measures, variables, and analysis.
- Multivariate statistics is required and description must be specific to the type of dependent variables and independent variables.
- The study is feasible (in terms of cost, time, resources, approvals, etc.).

LIMITATIONS, DELIMITATIONS, AND SIGNIFICANCE

- Limitations and delimitations are detailed.
- Potential biases are detailed.
- Potentially confounding factors are described, and methods to address impact are discussed.
- Methods for missing data are detailed.
- How the study will advance the field is discussed.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- Confidentiality and privacy are discussed.
- References and timetable of research activities are presented.
- The proposal should be 35–45 pages.

APPENDIX B: QUANTITATIVE DISSERTATION GUIDELINES

The following list contains most of dissertation components of a quantitative dissertation. These components must be adapted to each dissertation.

TITLE PAGE

COPYRIGHT PAGE

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

DEDICATION (optional)

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS –complete table of contents needed

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES (or LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS)

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS (optional)

LIST OF SYMBOLS (optional)

PREFACE (optional)

ABSTRACT

FIVE CHAPTERS

BIBLIOGRAPHY (or REFERENCES, or WORKS CITED)

APPENDIX (or APPENDICES)

GLOSSARY (optional)

INDEX (optional)

The following table is a sample of a dissertation table of contents. Use the Microsoft Word feature to create a table of contents by applying heading styles throughout the document.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

- Concise, brief, rational statement of what was done in the study (150-200 words)
- Describes the key findings and conclusion of the study
- Main numeric results (effects, significance from statistical analyses) included.

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

- Presents the context and the knowledge gap, the study purpose, what was done in the study and how it fills the knowledge gap.
- Clear and specific to the topic.
- Reflects the specific characteristics of the study that is already conducted

Problem Statement

- Novel and significant study.
- Problem clearly identified; knowledge gap, study significance and novelty clearly addressed
- Study purpose and aims stem clearly from the problem statement and knowledge gap.
- Clearly presented, focused and specific
- Theory-based

Research Question(s)

- Question(s) clear, articulated and specific corresponding exactly to the study purpose
- Thought provoking; provide original insights to the issues
- Promise of contribution to discipline, and or communities is clear and compelling
- Clearly addressing the knowledge gap
- Comprehensive in scope. Includes main and sub questions
- Refers to the main constructs and their relationships (relationships to be investigated in the study)

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature Review

- There is a relevant synthesis of empirical and theoretical literature
- Critical understanding of literature is evident in style, organization and content
- Mastery of appropriate canon is evident. Sources cited are rich and diverse.
- Recent publications.
- Clearly Identifies and discusses the knowledge gap
- Comprehensive in scope.
- Key issues are included. Addresses all the components of the research question/s (main constructs and their associations)
- Multiple citations from diverse literature are woven together cogently.
- Reframes existing controversies or issues in the literature in novel terms.

Theoretical Orientation and Conceptual Framework

- The theory, theories, theoretical models, or mechanisms have been identified and are relevant to the research questions and associations under study.
- The concepts and the relationships among the constructs/variables are presented clearly and logically
- The D.V.s and I.V.s are clearly assigned in the conceptual framework and there is a clarity of directionality
- There is a clear graphical presentation

Hypotheses

- The hypotheses correspond to the research questions
- The hypotheses are relevant and flow logically from the theory used
- The hypotheses are accurately stated
- The hypotheses are testable based on operationalized variables

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Research Design

- The design is accurately identified and described
- The design is appropriate and it will answer the study's hypotheses

- Includes sufficient information on protection for Human Subjects

Study Population

- Populations have been identified and described
- Recruiting and sampling procedure have been identified
- Power analysis, effect size have been calculated, are sufficient and correctly presented

Data Collection Tools

- Measurement instrument, etc. are valid, reliable, and correctly presented
- Measures exist for all variables
- Variables - Independent and Dependent Variables (subheading)
- Operationalized variables are identified and discussed
- Each variable described based on type (nominal, continuous etc.) and role in the analysis (IV/DV)

Statistical Analysis

- There is a correspondence between the research questions-measures-variables-analysis
- Multivariate statistics was performed unless the study was a randomized double blind clinical trial for which equivalence of study groups is clearly demonstrated. Multivariate analysis is appropriate and specific for each research question and for type of DV and IV.
- General
- Past tense is used (Only use this heading if necessary)

CHAPTER IV: DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

- Results are presented according to scientific presentation order and APA format. Results flow logically.
- Data Screening including assessment of missing data, outliners, normality, etc.
- Results have the following order: Descriptive Statistics, Bivariate Analyses, Multivariate Analyses.
- Descriptive analyses are appropriate for the type of variables and presented for all relevant variables (begin with demographic analysis followed by study sample characteristics and frequencies)
- Assumptions checking (for example, Normality, Linearity, Heteroscedasticity, Multicollinearity).
- Bivariate statistics are appropriate for the type of variables and are used to test study hypotheses and assess confounding potential of covariates

- Multivariate Analyses are appropriate for the type of variables and are testing study hypotheses. Effects of control variables.
- Instrumentation and measurement model: validity and reliability for initial and final instruments.
- Specific results are presented for each analysis (i.e. coefficients, p-values, R squares for linear regression, Odds Ratios and Confidence Intervals for Logistic regression etc.)
- Statistical results are presented for an audience with professional knowledge of statistics.
- Data analysis is consistent to the analyses planned in the Methods section of the Dissertation
- Results for testing study hypotheses are included in tables and figures and interpreted appropriately
- Significant results besides those answering main research questions are highlighted and interpreted
- Tables/figures make sense independently and convey clear information. Only relevant information is included.
- Tables/figures are formatted for the dissertation
- Tables/figures have appropriate headings and footnotes and follow APA format
- The corresponding text precedes tables, complements the tables/figures, follows APA format in presenting statistical results, highlights and interprets important findings, and is not redundant

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

- Describes how the purpose of the study was accomplished by the statistical analysis.
- Discussion of the findings puts the study in a larger context, is extensive and exhaustive.
- Main findings are briefly presented. The largest part of the discussion compares and contrasts study findings with past studies in the literature. Peer-reviewed literature is used.
- Unexpected findings are discussed. Potential mechanisms/theories for unexpected findings are proposed using peer-reviewed literature.
- Refers to all study hypotheses
- Implications and directions for future research are presented and flow logically from study results
- Study strengths, limitations and delimitations are detailed
- Potential biases are detailed
- Potentially confounding factors are described, and methods to address impact are discussed
- Methods for missing data are detailed
- How the study will advance the field is discussed
- Discussion ends with conclusive and definitive statements on main findings and implications (methodological, theoretical, practical)
- Limitations

REFERENCES

- Complete reference list, adhere to APA format

APPENDICES

(GENERAL ISSUES: Organization and Form)

- Sophisticated, well crafted and well linked sentences
- The document is cogently and proportionally constructed. Sections adhere as a whole to tell a compelling story.
- Adheres to TUI expectations re: obligatory sections, format and appropriate style (APA).

APPENDIX C: QUALITATIVE DISSERTATION GUIDELINES (PH.D. E.L. PROGRAM)

Previously, our Ph.D. program has accepted only quantitative or mixed-study-approach dissertations. However, a review of other WASC-accredited Ph.D. education programs shows that other programs in Education allow both quantitative and qualitative dissertation formats. Therefore, based on the results of benchmarking and an external reviewer's recommendation, Trident University has added qualitative methodology to the current allowable dissertation formats in the Ph.D. Educational Leadership Program. This change has been prompted by the highly specialized work of some of the students in the Ph.D. E.L. Program, including special education. Students in the special education field and other areas may have difficulty obtaining the large sample sizes necessary for quantitative research, but have access to a unique population that may lend itself to high-quality qualitative research. The modification to our dissertation requirement will enrich our students' learning experience and increase student success without sacrificing quality.

METHODOLOGY IN QUALITATIVE STUDY

Designing qualitative studies is quite different from designing quantitative studies. Qualitative research is defined as research devoted to developing an understanding of human systems, be they small (such as one or a small group of students/classrooms), or large (such as a cultural system). Qualitative research studies typically include ethnographies, case studies, and generally descriptive studies. Of the qualitative methodologies, currently only the case study is accepted in the Ph.D. E.L. program.

Case studies emphasize detailed contextual analysis of a limited number of events or conditions and their relationships (Soy 2006). The case study will be an individual or group studied for a specific period of time. Usually the study includes interviews (individual/group), data, and observations to triangulate conclusions and answer research questions.

Primary Goal of the Dissertation

The primary goal of the dissertation is to make an original and significant contribution to the body of knowledge with practical applications.

CHARACTERISTICS OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

- The research provides views that reality is constructed and supported by individuals interacting with their social worlds.
- The researcher decides the primary instrument for data collection and analysis.
- The research usually involves fieldwork.
- The study primarily employs an inductive research strategy.

- The product of a qualitative study is richly descriptive.
- In most cases, the design is emergent, flexible, and responsive to changing conditions of the study.

METHODOLOGY

DEVELOPMENT OF METHODOLOGY

I. Process used to bring about the product, and the design of the product
II. How was the process validated? By experts? During field testing? Or by employing evaluation methodology of the results?

EVALUATION OF METHODOLOGY

I. Process of identifying if a product is doing what it is supposed to be doing—reaching its goals and/or objectives
II. Sources are experts, and statistical procedures are appropriate

ANALYSIS OF QUALITATIVE METHODS

New technologies to analyze qualitative data and to report findings of qualitative studies include Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis programs:

1. Nvivo 8: http://download.qsrinternational.com/Document/NVivo8/NVivo8-Introducing-NVivo.htm
2. Transana: http://www.transana.org/about/Tour/index.htm

VALIDITY, RELIABILITY, AND ETHICS

- Validity
  - Internal validity vs. credibility
  - External validity vs. transferability
- Reliability vs. dependability
  - Explanation, triangulation, and audit trails
- Ethics
  - Autonomy, beneficence, and justice

SIX STEPS OF CONDUCTING A QUALITATIVE STUDY

1. Determine and define the research questions.
2. Select the cases and determine data gathering and analysis techniques.
3. Prepare to collect the data.
4. Collect data in the field.
5. Evaluate and analyze the data.

6. Prepare the report.

CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING QUALITATIVE STUDIES (AECT, 2001)

- Is the problem clearly stated? Does it have theoretical value and currency? Does it have practical value?
- Is the problem or topic situated in a theoretical framework? Is the framework clear and accessible? Does the document contain competing epistemologies or other basic assumptions that might invalidate claims?
- Is the literature review a critique or simply a repetition? Is it relevant? Does it appear accurate and sufficiently comprehensive?
- Are the theses stated in a clear and coherent fashion? Are they sufficiently demonstrated in an accessible manner? Are there credible warrants to claims made about the theses?
- Does the method fit the problem, and is it an appropriate one given the theoretical framework?
- Do the data collected adequately address the problem? Do they make explicit the researcher's role and perspective? Are the data collection techniques a "good fit" with the method and theory?
- Are the data aggregates and analysis clearly reported? Do they make explicit the interpretive and reasoning process of the researcher?
- Does the discussion provide meaningful and warranted interpretations and conclusions?

QUALITATIVE DISSERTATION OUTLINE

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

- Background of the Problem
- Statement of the Problem
- Purpose of the Study
- Research Questions
- Importance of the Study
- Scope of the Study
- Definition of Terms
- Delimitations and Limitations

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

- Rationale for the study
- Literature review
- Synthesize previous studies and explain knowledge gap

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODS

- The Qualitative Paradigm
- Qualitative Methods
- The Researcher's Role
- Data Sources
- Data Collection
- Data Analysis
- Verification
- Ethical Considerations
- Plan for Narrative *or* Pilot Study Results

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH FINDINGS

- Demographics data
- Participants
- Data analysis
- Summary

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSION, AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

- Summary
- Conclusions
- Discussion
- Suggestions for Future Research