

Delta State University

College of Education and Human Sciences

Committee members are charged with reviewing versions of the written dissertation, providing consultation and written feedback around proposal development, research methodology, data gathering, the dissertation manuscript and process, and meeting for a dissertation defense which is a culmination of the finished dissertation project (See the *DSU Dissertation Preparation Manual* for more information).

FINAL SEMESTER AND GRADUATION: IMPORTANT DATES

Having completed all coursework, passed the comprehensive examination, had a dissertation proposal approved, and while finishing work on the dissertation, the candidate must begin planning for graduation. Students are strongly encouraged to develop their own personal timeline for applying for graduation and completing the dissertation process in order to ensure that all requirements are met before the due dates. Students planning to graduate must meet all requirements and due dates set forth in the *DSU Dissertation Manual*.

The Doctoral Dissertation

The doctoral dissertation has traditionally been the written record of the candidate's individual, original research and scholarship that successfully advances the limits of human knowledge. The study must be appropriate to and significant in the academic field, requires a mastery and exhaustive exercise of research techniques, and should illustrate the researcher's critical thought and facility of expression.

According to the professional expertise and opinions of the graduate faculty, the dissertation must make an original contribution and it must demonstrate the candidate's fitness to continue the advancement of knowledge in the field of education. To assist in upholding these standards, the dissertation manual serves as the central source of information for completing the dissertation.

The Dissertation Manual

This manual represents the official guidelines for dissertation completion through the College of Education and Human Sciences at Delta State University. All DSU doctoral students are expected to follow the requirements detailed in this manual, along with all other stated DSU policies and procedures, for the duration of candidacy. When questions or concerns about any aspect of the DSU doctoral program arise, candidates are advised to contact the doctoral program coordinator, Dr. Jacqueline S. Craven (jcraven@deltastate.edu) in writing.

There are five primary sections in this manual. *Section I* addresses the process of dissertation completion while *Section II* addresses the components of the dissertation manuscript. *Section III* contains information on special considerations, *Section IV* offers samples of specific pages in the dissertation, and *Section V* includes important documents that candidates and committee members will need to use.

Note that other documents not included here may be required during the process, such as IRB forms or the application for graduation; however, the documents referenced in this manual are available at <http://www.deltastate.edu/>.

Roles and Expectations

It is imperative to clarify the roles and expectations at DSU for both candidates and dissertation committee Chairs/members. Of utmost importance is the doctoral candidate's role in completing the

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degree program. Not only is he/she responsible for successfully completing coursework according to DSU policies and procedures, but doctoral candidates must also successfully complete the dissertation.

This process has a definitive timeline as original research studies in educational contexts vary with regard to size, time, and complexity. Therefore, it is incumbent upon the candidate to understand the nature of educational research studies and how this may affect the length of his/her personal degree program.

All candidates and committee members should follow the:

- 1) *Code of Ethics* set forth by the American Educational Research Association (AERA) ([http://www.aera.net/Portals/38/docs/About_AERA/CodeOfEthics\(1\).pdf](http://www.aera.net/Portals/38/docs/About_AERA/CodeOfEthics(1).pdf)), the
- 2) *Common Guidelines for Education Research and Development* as reported by the Institute of Education Sciences, the U. S. Department of Education (U.S.D.E.), and the National Science Foundation (NSF) (<http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2013/nsf13126/nsf13126.pdf>) as well as the
- 3) American Psychological Association's (APA) reporting standards <https://www.apa.org/pubs/authors/jars.pdf> to the extent that it is applicable to the research design.

Additionally, all candidates who have completed coursework since 2012 should closely follow the outline for a research proposal, which is employed in upper-level ELR courses and based upon the aforementioned guidelines, and ensures the careful attention to detail required in empirical research.

The Candidate's Role. Beyond this, it is critical for candidates to comprehend their responsibilities for completing requirements during dissertation hours. To maintain sufficient progress toward degree completion, doctoral candidates are responsible for initiating all processes involved therein.

Candidates should be familiar with all requirements for completing the dissertation, should complete and submit drafts and revisions in a timely fashion, and should remain in contact with the dissertation chair at all times. At minimum, students enrolled in dissertation hours should submit two substantial drafts per semester. Further, candidates are responsible for coordinating efforts to ensure that all work is in compliance with DSU guidelines.

The Dissertation Chair's Role. While doctoral candidates must assume the largest role for completing the dissertation, the primary objective for dissertation Chairs and all committee members should provide scholarly feedback on dissertation drafts within a three-week timeframe. *Scholarly feedback* includes written comments on the topic, research design, structure of the document, procedures, unique features, APA formatting, and grammatical features of each submitted draft.

Committee Chairs/members should provide specific and detailed comments on these and other applicable aspects of student work, particularly APA formatting throughout the document. As research professionals and mentors, committee Chairs/members should understand this is an inherent requirement for fostering strong dissertation research studies.

Additionally, all feedback should be provided in written form as often as possible to ensure accurate representations of the intended effect.

While committee Chairs/members should always communicate with candidates in a timely fashion, they are not responsible for initiating work on behalf of the student. Rather, the dissertation Chair will maintain the most frequent contact with the candidate for the duration of dissertation completion.

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In all instances, dissertation Chairs fulfill four important needs: a) they serve as the initial professor of contact, b) they assist the candidate with forming and working with a strong dissertation committee, c) they work with the student in following a timeline for conducting dissertation research, and d) they support the candidate with adhering to sound research practices and methodology.

The Methodologist’s Role. The dissertation committee methodologist serves as a reference for research design and implementation of the study. Methodologists read and provide written feedback in the form of email correspondence and progress forms, in addition to attending all committee meetings as called by the dissertation chair or candidate. Methodologists serve in an advisory role and do not engage in data collection or analysis, but do provide sound guidance to candidates throughout the duration of the study. Methodologists examine and evaluate all chapters, particularly chapters 1, 3-5 for research content, clarity, consistency, and APA formatting each semester until the student graduates.

The Reader’s Role. The dissertation committee reader serves as a reference for the written product describing the study from beginning to end. Readers carefully read and provide written feedback in the form of email correspondence and progress forms, in addition to attending all committee meetings as called by the dissertation chair or candidate. Readers serve in an advisory role and do not engage in conducting the literature review or synthesis, data collection, analysis, or interpretation but do provide sound guidance to candidates throughout the duration of the study. Readers examine and evaluate chapters 1-5 as well as references and appendices for research content, clarity, consistency, and APA formatting each semester until the student graduates.

Student & Committee Expectations

| Students | Chair & Committee |
|---|--|
| Follow ethical standards set forth by American Educational Research Association | Ensure that the candidate follows ethical standards set forth by American Educational Research Association |
| Follow research guidelines set forth by National Science Foundation | Ensure that the candidate follows research guidelines set forth by National Science Foundation |
| Follow APA & DSU reporting guidelines | Ensure that the candidate follows APA & DSU reporting guidelines |
| Follow DSU policies set forth in this manual | Ensure that the candidate follows DSU policies set forth in this manual |
| Submit drafts with complete revisions on at least two (2) occasions each semester | Provide feedback on all submitted revisions |
| Submit all required components of ELR 890 into Canvas portal | Complete progress form upon the student’s request |

Student & Committee Expectations

| | |
|--|---|
| Maintain frequent communication with the dissertation chair and members for the duration of dissertation completion | Provide guidance for navigating the dissertation process when necessary |
| Visit each committee member and chair at least 1 time per semester | Meet upon the student's request |
| Determine in advance each committee member & chair's preference for receiving updated draft revisions (i.e., electronically or paper copy) | Respond to all questions posed by the student |
| Provide all required forms at all committee meetings, including the dissertation proposal & defense | Assist with completing the forms provided |
| Follow the required submission dates for the dissertation defense as outlined in this manual | Ensure that the candidate follows all required submission dates accordingly |

Overview: Calendar* of the DSU Doctoral Program & Dissertation

The following is a guideline of the semester progression for the core doctoral courses. Ideally, students should complete all track requirements before taking core courses.

Year One - Students begin formulating ideas for the dissertation in ELR 605 & 701 while taking track courses required for the degree.

Year Two - Students complete ELR 702 & 804, which focus on drafting chapters one and three of the dissertation, respectively. Student also takes required core courses to foster further understanding of curriculum and supervision in leadership.

Year Three - Students complete ELR 805 & 888, thereby establishing an outline draft of chapter two of the dissertation. In ELR 888, chapters one through three are revised into one coherent narrative. Student takes final track and core courses to enhance conceptual knowledge and skills in research to support critical analysis of educational theory.

Year Four and beyond - Students begin to form dissertation committee and are paired with a dissertation chair. Student completes the comprehensive examination successfully to continue into dissertation hours. Additionally, students maintain continuous enrollment until graduation. Each candidate must have a minimum of 12 dissertation hours in ELR 890 to complete the doctoral core requirement.

**Variations may occur based on many factors such as data collection and personal work habits or motivation.*