



DISSERTATION MANUAL:
Guidelines for Doctoral Dissertations

CURRY SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA

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PREFACE

These guidelines are intended to give both doctoral students and faculty members at the Curry School of Education a set of procedures and expectations that will make the dissertation process easier, more predictable, and more successful. Nothing in these guidelines is intended to conflict with statements in the *University Record* or the requirements of the University of Virginia's Graduate School of Arts and Sciences. In any case of conflict, any statement in the *University Record* or in written policies of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences takes precedence.

These guidelines should also be interpreted as the minimum requirements of the Curry School of Education. Departments or programs in the Curry School may add requirements or guidelines as they see fit – as long as they are no less demanding than the guidelines set forth in this document.

Part I provides general suggestions and resources that will help students write a better proposal and dissertation. These suggestions and resources may also help faculty members provide better guidance and feedback to dissertation advisees. The general suggestions begin with the purposes of a dissertation and include comments on writing English prose. Good written English, particularly technical prose, often differs from acceptable spoken English. The essence of the guidelines' recommendations regarding written English is captured by the following:

Flowery language from the pen of a poet is one thing; written English as a means of everyday communication is another. It should be plain and simple and accurate. It should use no more words than are needed to do the job and they should be the right words. (Humphrys, 2004, p. xvi)

Part II is in Q & A format and is intended more specifically to answer students' questions, although faculty members may find it helpful as well. It is organized around common questions about the dissertation process. It amplifies the suggestions of Part I and ties suggestions to specific issues and procedures about which students may wonder. Any questions not answered by these guidelines should be directed to the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs in the Curry School of Education.

Part III provides guidelines for the preparation of dissertation manuscripts and examples of properly formatted pages and components.

The Appendix describes the manuscript-style dissertation and provides the procedures for this alternative dissertation.

Reference

Humphrys, J. (2004). Forword (sic). In J. Cochrane, *Between you and I: A little book of bad English* (pp. xi-xxi). Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks.

Sequence of Steps for Dissertation Requirements

1. Delimit area of interest.
2. Establish a dissertation Chair appropriate to your area of interest.
3. Form a dissertation committee (see “Record of Progress” and “Graduate Record” for requirements).
4. Confer with your dissertation Chair and committee to develop your dissertation proposal.
5. With the Chair’s consent, determine a calendar date and time when all committee members are available for the dissertation proposal defense.
6. Submit an announcement to the Curry School of Education, Admissions and Student Affairs Office, Room 104 **two weeks prior** to the date of the dissertation proposal defense.
7. Defend your dissertation proposal.
8. After successful defense, submit Institutional Review Board (IRB) forms for approval, if appropriate.
9. After receiving IRB approval, conduct your study by collecting and analyzing data according to your research design.
10. Work closely with your Chair during the revising of chapters 1 – 3 and the writing of chapters 4 and 5 (for traditional type of dissertations).
11. With the Chair’s consent, determine a calendar date and time when all committee members are available for the dissertation defense (see Deadlines for Graduation Dates)
12. Submit an announcement to the Curry School of Education, Admissions and Student Affairs Office, Room 104 **two weeks prior** to the date of the dissertation defense.
13. Defend your dissertation.
14. Incorporate edits pursuant to your committee’s recommendations.
15. Once you successfully defend, submit the final copy of the dissertation to the Admissions Office, Curry School of Education before the specified deadlines for doctoral dissertations and to all committee members. (See page 44 for additional information.)

PART I: GENERAL SUGGESTIONS AND EXPECTATIONS

Purposes of the Dissertation

A dissertation is required to demonstrate that the student can

- carry out important, independent research in his or her field
- describe the project and its outcomes in lucid writing.

A dissertation is a final performance test in which someone pursuing a doctoral degree proposes, carries out, writes about, and defends orally a research project, demonstrating his or her competence in research. Writing a dissertation is an opportunity for a student to satisfy his or her curiosity about an important research question and show the dissertation committee and other interested individuals that he or she can function independently as researcher.

Questions Worth Answering

A student must think about his or her dissertation as a question that is worth answering. This means that the question is important (knowing the answer will make a difference in how people think about or practice education), trying to find the answer or replicate previous research is the next logical step, the answer can be found through research (i.e., we need evidence and/or good reasoning, not just opinion or values), and the student has the resources of energy, time, and money to conduct a project reasonably designed to answer the question.

Every student must have a good command of the literature on a topic before he or she can pose a good question, and most must think a lot about what to ask and how to ask it. Good questions cannot be posed without knowledge of what researchers already know. Therefore, the first step in posing a question worth answering is reviewing the literature on the topic.

Reviews of Literature

Specific guidelines for reviews are difficult for the diverse group of programs found in the Curry School. However, all good reviews of literature have common features. Invariably, they

- are focused on a relatively well-delineated topic
- are exhaustive of the important research on that topic
- separate the meaningful from the meaningless
- are coherent
- make sense of what is known about that topic and what needs to be known.

If one finds hundreds of studies on a topic, then that choice of topic may be too broad and needs narrowing. In some cases, such as a meta-analysis or a more conceptual study, then a broader perspective is warranted. A good review of literature for a dissertation, however, typically focuses on a specific question. Literature reviews like those found in *Review of Educational Research* are likely too broad for dissertation purposes. If the review is to lead to a good research question, then the review needs carefully defined limits so that it leads logically to the question being asked.

An exhaustive review of important literature, even if the focus is clear, is not easily or quickly accomplished. For example, it will require electronic searches through databases as well as hand searches through journals and other materials so that the student is quite sure to miss nothing important. It requires contacting researchers, including those at the same and at other universities, who are working on the same or a highly similar topic to find out what reports they have submitted for publication, what reports they are preparing, and what projects they have proposed or know are under way. Researchers must not work in isolation or assume that whatever has been published is the most current available information. A good review will state all the methods of search used to find relevant literature.

A frequent mistake in reviews of literature is assuming that all studies or publications have equal merit or meaning. Some published studies are sound; some are foolish. A good review separates the sound from the unsound; it may mention studies of little or no merit or even ignore them, but it gives disproportionate attention to those studies having the best designs and arriving at the most defensible conclusions. Reviewers of literature are well advised to keep two things in mind: (a) studies that have undergone rigorous peer review are typically more trustworthy than are those that have not and (b) peer review is imperfect, meaning that reviewers sometimes recommend for publication studies that contain serious methodological flaws or misinterpretations.

A good review is critical; it examines all studies with a skeptical eye. Not everything published is of high quality. Some publications are poorly written, poorly thought out, and unintelligible, or they provide misinformation. Some publications rely but little on peer review, and even rigorous peer review is open to corruption. Some print publications are only slightly more “filtered” than are Internet sites. Skepticism about publications is fully warranted; assuming that all published studies are fatally flawed or misleading is not.

Good reviews may be organized in a variety of ways. Some are chronological, following the thread of an idea and its development over time. Others are topical, bringing together ideas – sometimes disparate ideas – in a meaningful way. All share the feature of leading the reader through a seeming thicket of information and arriving at conclusions that are logical and supported by reliable evidence.

After reading a good review, the reader should be able to say, “I now understand this body of information, its weaknesses, and how prior research leads to the question being asked.” A good review is not, therefore, a mere recitation of studies. It is evaluative,

coherent, and forward-looking, an integration of what is known and what remains unanswered.

Research Designs and Data Analyses

The choice of research design should follow from the question(s) being asked. The reader of a dissertation should be able to see how the research method is a natural outgrowth of the research question. Some research studies are designed to test hypotheses. Some are descriptions of phenomena without experimental manipulation. Some are exploratory, in that they probe the existence of a phenomenon for the purpose of providing guidance for later experimental or descriptive studies. Some are conceptual, and may explore the plausibility or implications of new ways of thinking about a given domain or the problems with existing conceptions.

Legitimate studies of education are so varied that guidelines for design and data analysis can be only general. Some critics, including the late physicist Richard Feynman, have made disparaging remarks about educational research. In his book, *Surely You're Joking, Mr. Feynman!* (1985), he argued that educators think meaningful results are obtained merely by following certain rituals of method. He believed that educators do not pose important questions based on what is already known and do not test ideas about teaching and learning in ways that can be proved wrong, that educators only go through the motions of doing research because their findings cannot actually be disproved. He believed that the findings of educational "research" are predetermined, that method is mistaken for substance. Sound method is necessary but not sufficient for doing meaningful research. The best dissertations should prove Feynman to be profoundly wrong about educational research.

Both quantitative and qualitative research can be meaningless exercises; both are capable of producing findings that are reliable and that matter. Research courses should lead those who take them to know the difference between strong and weak designs, between data analyses that are appropriate and those that are not, and between justifiable and unjustifiable conclusions. However, knowledge of research design, data analysis, and interpretation of findings does not, in itself, guarantee that a given dissertation proposal is defensible. The advisor and committee must judge whether a proposal is defensible and has been defended successfully.

The common element in all defensible research is systematic inquiry, better known as science. Science is not a particular procedure or experimental model. It is organized skepticism that examines alternative explanations of phenomena and attempts to find those that are simplest and most reliable. Science is universal, in that it neither respects nor disrespects any culture (defined by gender, color, nation of origin, and so on). Scientific thinking requires detachment from advocacy. Science serves no political purpose, requiring only empirical and argumentative honesty.

Note that science does not demand experimentation in the sense of manipulating independent variables. For example, astronomy may be quite scientific, although no “experiments” like those done in many branches of science are possible. However, evidence of phenomena and their explanation based on reliable observation are critical. Data based on a belief that is not open to empirical observation and confirmation by others who do not share the belief (e.g., that a space ship is parked behind one of Jupiter’s moons) will be rejected by scientists (e.g., the existence of the space ship will not be believed without empirical confirmation). Only observational data that survive skeptics’ challenges are allowable in any science.

An adequate research design for a dissertation will allow the student proposing the research to:

- specify the question that is being asked
- explain why answering the question is important
- explain why the design chosen is the best way of trying to answer the question
- explain what will be done and for what purpose
- explain how the data will be analyzed and why those procedures were chosen
- offer a defensible way of interpreting the data, regardless of what is found.

Commitment to a particular finding means that the only purpose of the project is to confirm one’s bias. Dissertation work, like other research worthy of the name, requires a dispassionate commitment to the results, even if they are not what one had hoped with considerable passion. “Designs” that can have only one acceptable outcome are advocacy designs, not research designs. A research design, whether quantitative or qualitative, must be calculated to yield information about an important question that can be answered in more than one way.

The best question for anyone contemplating research is, “What would a skeptic say about the results?” Researchers are skeptics who search for simple and reliable answers to important questions and question the answers people give. Skeptics may well disagree with each other, but they have something extremely important in common: They ask for evidence and choose to believe only what is supported by the best evidence or theory. They are not interested in an “experiment” in which the hypothesis cannot be disconfirmed. Neither are they interested in a “study” that produces data of no value to the field or that yields results that can easily be attributed to the advocacy of the “researcher” or that is not adequately supported by evidence. Credulity does not characterize skeptics’ approach to education.

Protection of Human Subjects and the Institutional Review Board Process

The University of Virginia has an Institutional Review Board (IRB) that must give explicit written approval for any research involving human subjects done under the auspices of UVA. (You may want to examine the related University web site at www.virginia.edu/vprgs/irb/). Students may not begin collecting data for their study without the written approval of the IRB if human participants are involved. Designated

Curry School faculty members can advise students about submitting proposed research to the IRB. Dissertation advisors will know which Curry faculty members are serving in this capacity or will be able to obtain this information from the Dean's office.

The IRB will want assurances that the researcher will take every precaution to protect participants' identity, privacy, and risk of social, psychological, or physical harm. Obtaining IRB approval requires completing forms provided by the IRB, and these forms must be signed by the dissertation advisor.

The IRB process demands meticulous attention to detail. Making changes to the IRB request and resubmitting the proposal to the IRB are often required. Consequently, a student does not ordinarily seek IRB approval until the dissertation committee has approved his or her research proposal. However, depending on the working relationship of student and advisor, the dissertation proposal defense and the IRB request may be scheduled in quick succession. The dissertation proposal should specify the approval to be sought from the IRB, and the student's schedule for the dissertation activities should include time needed to obtain IRB approval.

Any changes in the research method require the approval of the student's advisor. Changes in method may also require resubmission and approval of the IRB.

Relationships With Schools and Other Agencies That Provide Data

Obtaining the cooperation of schools and other agencies in research projects often is difficult. In part, this is because these organizations may feel victimized (taken advantage of) based on their prior experiences with UVA researchers. Too often, organizations have experienced one or more of the following traumas:

- being asked to do more than they had agreed
- being asked to give the project an inordinate amount of time
- contributing to research but not receiving any useful information from it
- being identified in research reports in unflattering ways
- being treated otherwise in ways that they consider disrespectful of their institution or their personnel.

For the sake of the student's project and subsequent researchers, all personnel in a school or other participating institution must be treated with respect, cordiality, and openness. Some institutions have their own research review procedures that must be followed in addition to those of the university. Those participating must know exactly what will and will not be expected of them, that they will receive all of the information from the study that they desire in a timely manner, and that they will be treated with respect as partners in the research project. Both the advisor and the student must be aware of and avoid pitfalls in relationships with schools and other participating agencies.

Like the rule for respecting the natural environment, the rule for every research environment must be this: Leave it as you found it, if not better. Think not only of the

participants in the proposed research but also of researchers who will hope to work later in the same environment.

Writing Style

Writing well is not easy. Reading good writing is easy – or, at least, easier than reading bad writing about the same idea. Good writing may or may not be elegant in style, but good writing is always clear. All good writing has three characteristics:

- It is grammatically correct.
- It is clear (in technical writing, such as a dissertation, it has only one meaning).
- It is simple.

Consider grammar. The words their and they're have entirely different meanings, as do the words piece and peace or its and it's. Using the wrong word, misspelling words, botching punctuation, making erratic changes of tense, using nonparallel constructions, failing to maintain subject-verb correspondence, misusing possessives, and inserting pronouns with uncertain antecedents are common grammatical errors. Most grammatical errors obscure a writer's meaning. Expressions such as "She gave it to him and I" (rather than the grammatically correct "She gave it to him and me") or "Him and I studied the design" (rather than the grammatical "He and I studied the design") may convey meaning, but they call needless attention to the writer's lack of skill.

Writing elegant prose is desirable, but writing clear and grammatical prose is more important. If in doubt, choose clarity over elegance. Do not mistake obscurity for profundity. Profound ideas are not difficult to understand if they are written about exceedingly well. Remember, too, that sentences can be grammatically correct but indecipherable – having the required grammatical structure, yet so convoluted, confusing, or self-contradictory that they are essentially meaningless. Consider the following examples of grammatically correct gibberish: "Educational research should become increasingly unintelligible to itself." "Logic is not helpful in trying to make sense of education because true education is not logical." Correct grammar is necessary but not sufficient for clarity.

Good writing is succinct; it wastes no words (i.e., it uses no words the writer could eliminate without clouding meaning). Strive for economy of expression. Find unneeded words and delete them. For example, "in this study" is a frequently used but often gratuitous expression. Consider how the three sentences opening this paragraph might have been written using more words and "throw-away" phrases (i.e., phrases that convey implicit meanings or that use more words than necessary to convey the intended meaning): *You can recognize good writing by the way the writer uses words, because something well written uses fewer words to say the same thing. We recommend that you strive for economy of expression in what you write in your dissertation. Look for all the words and phrases which you do not need, and when you find them delete all of them.* The opening three sentences are 31 words (counting *i.e.* as one word); the italicized sentences use 61. Simpler is nearly always better and clearer.

Do not assume that common expressions are correct. Many common errors creep into regular usage, but that does not make them grammatical, clear, or acceptably simple. For example, “one of the only” is a common but garbled phrase. “Only” implies that there is no other. “One of the few” is clear, as is “the only.” Which is often used when that is the grammatical choice (e.g., which in the italicized sentence in the previous paragraph should be that). That rather than who is often used to refer to a person or persons (e.g., “students that,” “a teacher that,” or “the superintendents that;” in each case, who is a better choice than that because the referent is a person, and who is also grammatical). A grammatical error commonly found in such prestigious publications as *The New York Times* is “None of the participants were...” (rather than “None of the participants was...”; note that none means zero, nobody, not a single one, requiring a singular verb, just as does one). Likewise, “Neither were...” (rather than “Neither was...”) is a common grammatical error. Neither is used to refer to one (of two). The phrase “15 items or less” is the kind of mistake that drives grammarians crazy because “15 items or fewer” is grammatically correct. Consult style manuals and books about grammar, such as those listed at the end of this section. Consult grammarians if necessary. Apply their principles. Be consistent.

Good writing takes practice and cannot be achieved without rereading and editing. Good writers read what they have written and try to make the text both shorter and clearer. Even the best writers have editors. The dissertation advisor and committee members serve as editors of the proposal and of the final product. No sentence or paragraph should be allowed to go on file unless it is grammatically correct and its meaning is clear, at least to every member of the committee.

Two relevant maxims of Mark Twain that everyone should keep in mind are: "The difference between the almost right word and the right word is really a large matter – 'tis the difference between the lightning-bug and the lightning." "The time to begin writing an article is when you have finished it to your satisfaction." The time to expect good writing – whether you are the writer or the advisor of the dissertation – is from the beginning. If someone reading it has to ask, “What does that mean?” then the phrase, sentence, or paragraph needs rewriting.

Good writers do several things:

- They reread what they have written, questioning themselves about grammar and clarity and editing their own work.
- They are keen observers of others' writing styles and imitate the best.
- They read or consult manuals on grammar and style as well as lexicons and correct their work accordingly.
- They use headings, summaries, and organization to help readers follow their line of argument.
- They weigh editorial feedback graciously and carefully, making all suggested changes that increase clarity or improve grammar, rejecting only those that obscure meaning or introduce grammatical errors.

Many resources are available to help writers hone their style, for example, a search of the Internet using Google, will produce a plethora of web sites featuring help with grammar. Searching any bookseller's shelves or online listings (e.g., Barnes & Noble, Amazon) will turn up many volumes on punctuation, grammar, and style. Most may be of great value to students and faculty. None covers every topic of interest. Therefore, you are likely to need several volumes to guide your writing.

Frequently recommended books include the following (note that more recent editions of some books may have been published; many titles are available):

American Psychological Association. (2001). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (5th ed.). Washington, DC: Author.

Cochrane, J. (2004). *Between you and I: A little book of bad English*. Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks.

Gordon, K. E. (1993). *The new well-tempered sentence: A punctuation handbook for the innocent, the eager, and the doomed* (expanded and revised). Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Stilman, A. (2004). *Grammatically correct: An essential guide to punctuation, style, usage & more*. Cincinnati, OH: Writer's Digest.

Strunk, W., & White, E. B. (2000). *The elements of style* (4th ed.). Boston: Longman.

Truss, L. (2003). *Eats, shoots & leaves: The zero tolerance approach to punctuation*. New York: Gotham.

Reference Style

Most dissertations will use the reference style of the American Psychological Association (APA). Some, particularly those in the history of education, may use an alternative style (such as the Chicago Manual of Style) while those in Athletic Training and Sports Medicine use the American Medical Association Style Guide. The most important consideration in reference style is thorough consistency. Not acceptable is a reference style that is mixed or inconsistent. APA has a publication manual that not only gives writers guidance on style but also specifies in minute detail how references are to be cited in text and how they are to be presented in a reference list. Make sure you are following the most recent APA style manual (visit www.apastyle.org for the latest information).

Reference style is something to be decided by the student in consultation with the dissertation advisor. If the choice is APA style, then the student and dissertation chair should follow it faithfully. If an alternative style is chosen, then the advisor and student must specify what the style is, and the student must follow a published manual of that style with fidelity. Most journals in education – but not all – prefer APA reference style.

Nearly all journals will review manuscripts using APA reference style even if they publish articles using a different style (*Phi Delta Kappan*, for example).

Schedule of Tasks and Accomplishments

As soon as a student has obtained the agreement of a faculty member to direct his or her dissertation research, the student and dissertation chair need to agree on a tentative schedule for completing the various tasks leading to the dissertation defense. This will include anticipated dates for the following:

- submission of drafts of the proposal to the advisor
- feedback from the advisor regarding drafts of the proposal
- submission, with the advisor's consent, of the proposal to committee members
- proposal defense
- IRB approval
- data collection
- data analysis
- submission of drafts of dissertation chapters to the advisor
- feedback from the advisor regarding drafts of the chapters
- submission of the dissertation to committee members
- defense of the dissertation

Anticipated dates may need to be revised, depending on how many drafts are necessary. However, the student's responsibility is to maintain a realistic schedule that allows sufficient time for each step in the process, including the dissertation chair's reading of and feedback to the student on drafts of the proposal and the dissertation and the committee members' reading of these documents. Time allowed for reading and feedback on drafts submitted by the student is a matter of negotiation between the student and dissertation chair. The student has a right to expect the dissertation chair and committee members to read documents within the time agreed upon. When developing a timeline, students need to recognize that most faculty members are on a 9-month contract and will not be available during the summer months for work with students on dissertations.

Students and dissertation chairs should anticipate that committee members will need at least two weeks to read the proposal and the dissertation. That is, the proposal defense should not be scheduled less than two weeks subsequent to the committee members' receipt of the proposal, nor should the dissertation defense be scheduled less than two weeks subsequent to the committee members' receipt of the dissertation.

Students and dissertation chairs must keep in mind deadlines for dissertation defenses for particular graduation dates. Students wanting to march in graduation exercises in the spring of a given year must successfully defend their dissertations **no later** than April 1 of that year; those graduating in the summer of a given year must defend **no later** than July 1; and those graduating at the end of the fall term must defend **no later** than November 15. A successful defense would be one in which the committee requires only relatively

minor revisions that can be completed by the dissertation submission deadline (see Question #18 of the Question and Answer section of this document).

Presenting Drafts to All Committee Members

Technology has made the presentation of electronic copies of documents feasible, but electronic copies are not acceptable to everyone. Remember that some people much prefer reading a paper copy to reading something on screen. If they prefer a paper copy but are given an electronic copy, then they must print the electronic copy, which requires more time, effort, and expense on their part. Do not make assumptions about the form in which people prefer to receive documents. All committee members should make their wishes clear. Students should ask their committee members what they prefer, if necessary, and give each individual drafts in the form he or she prefers.

Regardless whether documents are presented electronically or on paper, some presentations predictably drive committee members to distraction and should be avoided:

- electronic copies that the recipient cannot open or that lose their format
- unnumbered pages or pages not numbered consecutively so that readers have difficulty finding a particular page
- paper documents that do not lay flat on a table due to binding
- paper documents that are not reasonably secured and are in imminent danger of chaotic reorganization
- paper documents with hand-written corrections or documents that are difficult to read due to odd fonts or poor copy quality.

Students and dissertation chairs should be thoughtful about the demands on readers of proposals and dissertations. Making readers struggle with the physical management of a document puts the student at an immediate disadvantage. Pages should all be numbered consecutively within a document. A paper document should be secured within a closeable file folder. A paper document should be further held together by a device (e.g., a spring clip or a rubber band of sufficient strength) that allows easy handling as a single entity, yet allows the reader to lay pages flat for reading and editing. The general rule: Avoid presenting those who read and edit with needless frustration.

Students', Dissertation Chairs', and Committee Members' Responsibilities

Students are responsible for choosing a topic, submitting proofread drafts of materials to the advisor, and scheduling meetings for the defense of the proposal and dissertation. It is expected that students will maintain contact with the chair and methodologist throughout the process to confirm that the research and writing is following the agreed upon plan. The dissertation project is the student's responsibility, not the dissertation chair's, but the dissertation chair should be kept informed of problems and progress.

Dissertation chairs are responsible for reading drafts of each student's proposal and dissertation according to the agreed-upon schedule, for giving editorial or substantive feedback to the student, and for working with the student until he or she judges that the document is likely to be found acceptable by the dissertation committee members. Dissertation chairs should not allow distribution of drafts of materials to committee members that are likely to be judged unacceptable.

Committee members are responsible for reading proposals and dissertations within the agreed-upon time, suggesting editorial or substantive changes, and being able to explain why they do or do not believe the document submitted by the student is acceptable. Committee members who perceive major flaws in the document that are likely to result in a student's unsuccessful defense should inform the dissertation chair or student immediately. No good purpose is served by allowing a student to proceed with the defense of a proposal or dissertation resulting in predictable failure.

Students are not expected to provide food or drink for committee members or for others who may attend any defense. Some candidates choose to bring refreshments, but these should be kept to a minimum to avoid the appearance of attempting to influence the committee's decision.

Following a successful defense, a student should check with each member of his or her committee to find out if the member would like a copy of the dissertation once it is bound. If they do, the candidate must provide copies to those members. Binding is done after the dissertation is approved. Dissertations may be bound by the University's Copy Center or by a local, commercial establishment. However, all UVa dissertations will be sent to UMI Dissertations Publishing and will be included full text in Proquest's *Digital Dissertation Database* and the citation and abstract will appear in the index, *Dissertation Abstracts* unless the author opts out of this arrangement. (See Part III for final preparation of dissertations)

Attendance and Participation in Proposal and Dissertation Defenses

All proposal and dissertation defenses are publicly announced two weeks in advance. Anyone, including other students, other faculty members, and other interested persons may attend any meeting in which the student defends a proposal or dissertation. Persons who are not members of the committee are there as observers. They may not interject questions or comments unless they are explicitly invited to participate by the advisor. The student's advisor serves as the chair of the meeting and may, at his or her discretion, ask individuals to leave the defense during particular lines of questioning as well as at the conclusion of the defense.

In both cases – defense of the proposal and defense of the dissertation – all individuals who are not members of the appointed faculty examining committee must leave the room during committee deliberation. Only the student defending a proposal or dissertation is to return to the examining room for feedback from the advisor and committee. Observers

who wish to offer moral support to the examinee must do so without in any way participating in the proceedings unless they are invited to do so by the chair of the meeting and without compromising the student's examination.

Dissertations and Publication

Some programs may offer an alternative to writing a dissertation, which involves the option of preparing publishable papers. The details of this option are spelled out in the Appendix.

In rare cases, dissertations are published as books. In these cases, they are first written as dissertations and go through the typical dissertation processes.

Most dissertations that are published are greatly condensed. Occasionally, the review of literature is submitted separately for possible publication. More often, the literature review and methodology sections of the dissertation, appropriately condensed, are submitted. If the dissertation chair or a committee member works with the student in condensing and revising the review or the experimental section of the dissertation for submission as a possible journal publication, then the student, whose work is featured, should be the first author listed on the manuscript. Appropriate credit should be given to any individual who provided significant assistance but is not a co-author. For APA recommendations regarding the conversion of dissertations into journal articles, see <http://apa.org/journals/authors/guide.html#dissertation>

Additional Resources

Some students hire editors for their dissertation. This is acceptable, as long as the editor does not draft the document. Some students receive help from the [University's Writing Center](#) . In all cases, final responsibility for the document, including clarity, style, and reference format, resides with the student preparing the dissertation.

Published Dissertations. The University Library provides access to the Digital Dissertations database by Proquest. (In previous years the library subscribed to the database *Dissertation Abstracts*. *Digital Dissertations* is *Dissertation Abstracts* with the added value of full text.) This database provides access to the full text of most dissertations submitted from 1997 through the present. Currently, it also provides either full text or citations and abstracts to dissertations written from 1861 through 1996. For this later time frame, additional dissertations are being regularly added as full text. Digital Dissertations database provides this access to dissertations from North America, Europe and other continents. One may also access University of Virginia dissertations by author and title through the University's online catalog, VIRGO.

Books about writing dissertations. Resources that may be helpful to writers have already been mentioned. However, a particularly helpful guide for writing dissertations (but, again, only one of many) is:

Glatthorn, A. A., & Joyner, R. L. (2005). *Writing the winning thesis or dissertation: A step-by-step guide* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks CA: Sage.

Resources for preparing and filing a dissertation at Curry. Instructions for preparing a dissertation so that it will be acceptable to University Microfilms and be ready to bind and file are included in Part III of this document, "Guidelines for Dissertation Manuscript Preparation."

Remember that for APA reference style, the most recent edition of the APA publication manual is the last word. If APA reference style is chosen, then the most recent edition of the APA manual should be followed faithfully.

The Education Library in Ruffner Hall has many useful resources and services for doctoral candidates, including one-on-one consultations, access to databases (including Education Full Text, PsycInfo, Medline, Digital Dissertations, and Sport Discus) from off-Grounds, and short courses such as the ones for bibliographic software. Library staff can offer advice about writing your dissertation's title and abstract, preparing your reference lists, and more. For a complete list of support services for doctoral candidates see the web site <http://curry.edschool.virginia.edu/admissions/dissertations/support.html>

PART II: ANSWERS TO COMMON QUESTIONS

1. When should I start thinking about my dissertation?

Although you must complete your coursework and comprehensive exams before proposing a dissertation, you are well advised to start thinking about your dissertation as soon as you are admitted to a doctoral degree program. Few people can just “toss off” a doctoral dissertation. Most people have to give their dissertation a lot of thought, and the longer and more deeply you think about it the better off you’ll be. You are well advised to take your doctoral program one step at a time as far as your *focus* is concerned. So don’t panic if you enter a doctoral program not knowing what you are going to do for your dissertation. However, start thinking as soon as you can about possible topics and projects.

2. What should I do to prepare for my dissertation?

First, complete all of the other program requirements, including accumulating the required credits. Complete a required sequence of courses in research methodology so that you are equipped with the knowledge of research questions, research methods, and data analysis that will allow you to conduct a study independently. Second, choose a topic and have a plan of research for your dissertation. The topic should be one you choose, not someone else’s choice, and the research plan must be yours. Third, choose an advisor or co-advisors for your dissertation and a dissertation advisory committee of qualifying faculty, meeting the requirements for number and program/school representation. Your choice of advisor(s) and committee members will depend on the topic and methodology you choose. Neither your advisor nor your committee must be the same for your dissertation as for your program of studies.

Your choice of a topic and research question is critical. Your choice is not something to be taken lightly. Both topic and question require careful thought. The topic must be something in which you have an abiding interest. Remember that you will be working on this topic intensively for a prolonged period, so your topic must not be something in which you have only a passing interest. The research question you pose must be answerable, important, and a logical outgrowth of what is already known about your topic.

Understanding what is already known about a topic requires reading the existing research literature on the topic. This demands careful searching of the literature using both electronic searches and hand searches of library holdings, especially current issues of professional journals. Remember also that the published literature represents what was done in the past, not what is currently being done. Information you find in books and even in current journals may be several years old due to lags in data analysis and time required for the publication process. Hence, you are well advised to identify prominent researchers who are working on your topic and establish communication with them to find out what related projects are currently under way and what research reports are awaiting publication.

3. What constitutes an acceptable dissertation plan?

Depending on the nature of your dissertation plan, some of the following may not apply. Some dissertations are descriptive or historical (i.e., no independent variables are manipulated). Some are exploratory. Hence, the following parts must be interpreted to go with the research design. In every case, however, the plan must detail what you are going to do and why.

An acceptable plan for the typical study, whether quantitative or qualitative, has several basic parts, all of which are essential. If any one of these is missing, then your plan falls short of acceptability.

- a. A researchable question, meaning one for which:
 - An answer is important (i.e., knowing the answer makes a significant contribution to the field).
 - The answer is not known or needs further verification (i.e., your study is a next logical step in previous research but has not been answered to date).
 - You can find an answer through research (i.e., the answer is a matter of evidence, not a matter of opinion or values).
 - You have the resources of energy, time, and money to conduct a project reasonably designed to answer the question.

- b. A sample with which you are going to work, meaning that you must state:
 - the approximate number of participants or name the sources of information
 - the basic characteristics and location of the participants or sources
 - your plan for obtaining access to the participants or sources.

- c. If you are doing an experimental or quasi-experimental study, then at least one independent variable that you are going to manipulate; if you are doing a nonexperimental study, then the details of your procedure (i.e., what you are going to do with the sample). In both cases, you must state:
 - precisely what you will do and why doing it is important
 - to whom or to what you will do it
 - the estimated time required to do what you propose
 - the estimated resources and permissions required.

- d. If you are doing an experimental or quasi-experimental study, then at least one dependent variable; if you are doing a nonexperimental study, then the details of your data collection (i.e., what you are going to measure as the outcome of what you do or how you are going to assess the phenomenon you are assessing). In both cases you must state:
 - what you will measure and how
 - why the measure(s) is(are) important

- e. The way you are going to analyze your data. You must be able to state:
 - how you will manage, code, and analyze the data
 - how you will protect human subjects (participants) from possible harm

In addition to these parts, you must outline a schedule of events leading to completion of your project. That is, the sixth essential part (f) is a timeline showing the periods required to accomplish the tasks you are going to undertake and the anticipated dates by which each task will be accomplished.

4. Who should be my dissertation chair?

Do not assume that the person who has been your advisor through your program of study (i.e., for your coursework and exams) must continue as your dissertation chair. Your dissertation chair should be someone who is knowledgeable about your topic and procedures and is willing to direct your dissertation research. A person unfamiliar with the topic you have chosen to pursue or the methodology you intend to use would not be a good choice. Your dissertation chair should be someone with whom you believe you can have a good working relationship. A person with whom you know you will have serious conflict personally or conceptually is not a good choice. Your advisor should be someone who can and will help you do better research and writing than you can do without their advice.

Your dissertation chair is someone who can help you shape a good dissertation. This is the person to whom you will take drafts for feedback and editorial suggestions. Your dissertation chair is the person who will tell you when your proposal and then your dissertation are ready to go to the rest of the dissertation committee and when you are ready to schedule your respective defenses.

Sometimes having a secondary dissertation chair is a good idea. The nature of your topic may be such that no single faculty member has the expertise to advise you. Sometimes, a junior faculty member and a senior faculty member make a good team for you. If you consider having co-advisors, just be certain that the co-advisors know they will be working together and that they have no major conflicts of opinion about the topic or the methodology. Also, recognize the reality that one of the co-advisors must agree to take the lead and be the primary person with whom you will work. The secondary chair must agree to play a supporting role.

Finally, communicate clearly with your dissertation chair(s).

- a. Explain to your program advisor that you want him or her to be your dissertation chair or, alternatively, that you want to choose someone else to advise your dissertation. Explain your reasons for your choice. No one should be left with questions about why you chose the person you did.
- b. If you are going to ask someone other than your program advisor to direct your dissertation, then make an appointment with that person to place your request. Do not expect or demand an immediate reply. Negotiate a timeline

for receiving an answer if you do not get one immediately. Accept the faculty member's decision graciously.

5. Who should be on my dissertation committee?

Besides your dissertation chair(s), you must have a minimum of two additional committee members for an Ed.D. and three members for a Ph.D., at least one of which must be from a program other than the one in which you are doing the majority of your study (i.e., your "home" program). You may have more than the minimum number, but be aware that each additional member complicates setting dates for your proposal defense and your final dissertation defense. You may have a committee member from another university with approval from the Dean's office, but this adds additional complications. Choose your dissertation committee with the advice and consent of your advisor.

6. What are the elements of a good dissertation proposal?

A good proposal clearly tells anyone who reads it why you want to do the research (why it is important), what question(s) you are asking, what related research has been done, what you are going to do and how you are going to go about the work, and how you are going to analyze what you find. A good proposal presents sufficient material to convince readers – especially your committee – that the study is worth doing, that you know what you're doing, and that if you do what you propose as planned you will have completed a viable dissertation. In essence, an approved proposal is like a contract: Fulfill it, and you'll have a fully legitimate claim to success; violate its terms and you will have failed. For this reason, all the terms must be written clearly. Vague proposals, like vague contracts, are invitations to trouble.

A good dissertation proposal includes all of the elements of an acceptable dissertation plan. It may be written as the initial chapters of a dissertation. However, some advisors prefer an abbreviated proposal of about 20 double-spaced pages. Still, in this case, the proposal addresses all aspects of the study. Not acceptable is a proposal in which important aspects are not addressed. Rely on your advisor's guidance for the length and level of detail in your proposal. A good proposal includes:

- the context or background for your research question(s)
- definition of key terms and variables
- your research question(s) and, if you make any, your hypothesis(es)
- an explanation of the significance of your question(s)
- a review the literature related to your research question(s) summarizing the state of knowledge about your question(s) and explaining what remains unknown
- an explanation of your research method(s), including participants, data collection, and data analysis (and, for experimental or quasi-experimental studies, independent and dependent variables)

Proposals and dissertations may be organized in more than one way. You and your dissertation chair should discuss the organization of your proposal and your dissertation

before you begin writing it so that there are no surprises for either of you. Qualitative dissertations vary in organizational format, but the typical five-chapter organization for a quantitative dissertation is as follows:

Chapter 1: Introduction and overview, including background or context for your research question(s), hypothesis(es) (if any), definitions of key terms and variables, and significance of the project.

Chapter 2: Review of literature, including a summary of what is known from the current literature and a statement of what is not known but should be investigated.

Chapter 3: Research methods, in which you describe your participants, procedures, data collection, and data analysis.

Chapter 4: Findings, in which you present your data and analysis(es).

Chapter 5: Interpretation, in which you interpret your findings in relation to the literature review in chapter 2 and state the questions that should be investigated next.

If you and your dissertation chair agree that your proposal should consist of draft chapters and you follow this five-chapter organization, then you might agree that the proposal should consist of complete drafts of chapters 1, 2, and 3 with possible speculation about chapters 4 and 5 in the case of a quantitative dissertation.

7. How can I find good examples to follow for my proposal and dissertation?

Ask your dissertation chair for examples of well-prepared proposals and well-written dissertations. Your dissertation chair may give you examples of the work of previous students or refer you to proposals or dissertations chosen as exemplars by program, department, or school committees. Remember, too, that no work is perfect. You should not imitate the errors in the exemplars you examine, assuming that if someone else has made them you will be exempt from criticism or responsibility. Strive for perfection, even if you understand that absolute perfection is impossible and is not demanded.

8. Are proposal and dissertation proposal defenses open to the public?

All proposal and dissertation defenses are publicly announced two weeks in advance. Anyone, including other students, other faculty members, and other interested persons may attend any meeting in which the student defends a proposal or dissertation. Persons who are not members of the committee are there as observers. They may not interject questions or comments unless they are explicitly invited to participate by the dissertation chair. The student's dissertation chair serves as the chair of the meeting and may, at his or her discretion, ask individuals to leave the defense during particular lines of questioning as well as at the conclusion of the defense.

You are encouraged to attend proposal and dissertation defenses to familiarize yourself with the process.

9. What are the expectations for a dissertation proposal defense?

First, you and your dissertation chair must agree on a date and time and you must make sure that all your committee members can meet on the chosen date and at the specified time. You need to reserve a room for the defense, and you must allow two hours for the event. Be sure to reserve any audio-visual equipment with the Curry School's Educational Technologies Office through its [on-line equipment reservation system](#) . Testing equipment prior to the defense is also recommended. Submit an announcement to the Curry School of Education, Admissions and Student Affairs Office, Room 104 two weeks prior to the date of your dissertation proposal defense.

Your dissertation chair will be in charge of the meeting and will ask you to make a brief presentation (approximately 15 min.) in which you summarize major points:

- why your proposed research is important
- the question(s) you propose asking
- precisely what you propose to do
- exactly how you intend to measure or assess the phenomena of interest
- how you propose to analyze and interpret your data or evidence

Rehearse this presentation. Make sure your presentation is coherent and complete but succinct.

After your presentation, each member of the committee will be given the opportunity to ask you questions intended to probe your understanding of your proposal and obtain clarification of points you have made. Committee members may also suggest changes in any aspect of your proposal. Remember that opinions may differ about any aspect of your study. You must weigh carefully but immediately the advisability of arguing for your point of view and accepting the suggestions of your committee. To the extent that you cannot defend what you have proposed, you are likely to be seen as failing your defense. However, to the extent that you remain inflexible in the face of committee members' arguments for changes or adjustments that would strengthen your project, you are likely to be seen as failing also – in this case, failing to see things you did not think about. Thus, the proposal defense requires that you demonstrate two things: first, you and your dissertation chair have thought deeply and carefully about what you propose to do, so that the “big picture” of your proposal is entirely defensible; second, you are able to weigh the suggestions of your committee and accept those that will strengthen your study.

After all of the committee members have had opportunities to ask questions and make suggestions or comments, your dissertation chair will ask you and any observers to leave the room while the committee deliberates. The committee's deliberation may take up to 30 minutes. After the committee's deliberation, you will be recalled to the examining room

by your dissertation chair, and the committee's decision will be explained to you. The committee may arrive at any of the following decisions:

- a. Your proposal is not acceptable.
- b. Your proposal is acceptable with specified changes that must be seen in writing by each committee member before approval.
- c. Your proposal is acceptable with specified changes as noted by your dissertation chair (and members of your committee are willing to sign your Record of Progress with that understanding).
- d. Your proposal is acceptable as submitted to the committee.

You are expected to bring your Record of Progress to the proposal defense so that if your proposal is approved your dissertation chair and the committee members can sign that document. An approved dissertation proposal is, in essence, a contract stating that, if you carry out the project as described in the proposal, the committee cannot find your dissertation defense unacceptable based on your research plan.

10. What are the quality indicators for the dissertation?

The intent of the Dissertation (Ed.D/Ph.D.) is for the student to demonstrate:

- independent thinking and action in the selection of a significant research topic and in the carrying out of research on that topic;
- mastery and interpretation of theory, research, and application in student's chosen field of study;
- ability to contribute significantly to the state of knowledge and/or practice in the student's chosen field of study through the creation of an original piece of research that adds to a knowledge base, informs practice, and/or provides data for making informed policy decisions;
- ability to research complex ideas objectively and communicate the results knowledgeably and articulately;
- proficiency in the use of at least one research methodology and the ability to defend its appropriateness to a research problem.

In order for each student to demonstrate the above intents and to produce a high quality, scientifically sound dissertation the following indicators have been developed.

Using the Dissertation Quality Indicators within the Dissertation Process

These indicators can be used as a guide for students as they develop and write their dissertations, as a feedback mechanism for faculty as they work with students through the dissertation process, and as a means of structuring questions and discussion at both dissertation proposal defenses and final dissertation defenses. Potential uses are delineated for each participant at different stages in the dissertation process.

Students. Doctoral students should read and understand the quality indicators against which a dissertation will be evaluated before they begin the process of drafting their proposal. If any indicators are unclear, consultation with the dissertation committee chair and/or advisor is essential to ensure that all participants share common expectations. The

indicators are presented in an order that reflects the general format of most dissertations; thus students should attend particularly to the initial quality indicators when developing a proposal (e.g., theoretical framework, questions, methodology). Obviously, all quality indicators are important as the full dissertation is drafted.

Dissertation Committee Chairs. Dissertation committee chairs should make certain that students are familiar with the Curry Dissertation Manual and the Dissertation Quality Indicators early in their programs but certainly as soon as preliminary discussions about a dissertation topic begin. As the dissertation process proceeds, it is imperative that the student and dissertation committee chair have a common understanding of the quality indicators and their application to research studies of the type the student proposes to undertake.

As the student drafts a dissertation proposal, and ultimately a complete final dissertation, the chair may use the quality indicators as a review guide to provide concrete feedback to the student on both areas of strength and areas in need of revision. It is presumed that any dissertation proposal or complete dissertation manuscript will go through a number of revisions in a cycle between student and dissertation committee chair. The Dissertation Quality Indicators are meant to provide one means of structuring this feedback loop. It is also presumed that in most cases the dissertation committee chair serves as a gatekeeper of sorts in this process; when the chair feels that the proposal (or final dissertation manuscript) is of acceptable quality, the student's manuscript is then ready for distribution to the entire committee.

The dissertation committee chair may also use the quality indicators checklist as a general guide to frame questions for the student during a defense, as well as a way to structure the discussion that occurs among committee members as they deliberate on the outcome of a defense.

Dissertation Committee Members. It is recognized that dissertation committee members take on varying roles and have varying levels of involvement with students' dissertation research and writing. Because of ongoing collaborative research projects, independent studies, or extensive coursework in a particular area, some committee members other than the chair will have an active role in the dissertation process. In these cases, committee members may use the Dissertation Quality Indicators just as the chair does, holding preliminary discussions with the student about specific areas, or providing feedback to the student on drafts of the proposal and complete dissertation manuscript.

In other cases, committee members may be only tangentially involved in the actual dissertation study, and may be called upon to read the proposal or final manuscript only after it has been drafted and revised in an iterative process between student and chair. In this case, the committee member uses the Quality Indicators Checklist as a review form to provide feedback to the student at a proposal or final defense.

Using the Dissertation Quality Indicators to Identify Exemplary Dissertations

It is hoped that the dissertation quality indicators can also be used to help faculty identify exemplary dissertations that may warrant recognition both within Curry and within the field at large. When one or more aspects of the dissertation are rated as Acceptable (see Rating the Indicators, below), faculty are encouraged to make particular note of exemplary quality. This may be seen in any number of indicators, as the dissertation may be particularly well-conceived, may meet high standards for methodological rigor, may be extremely well-written, and the like. Notes about exemplary work can be made in the comments section under each category.

Quality indicators are presented across eight broad categories. Note that sections dealing with results and their interpretation (i.e., Section 4, Results; and Section 5, Conclusions and Implications) apply to final dissertations only and not to dissertation proposals.

Abstract. Despite the brevity of the abstract, it should provide a comprehensive summary of the dissertation. The information contained within the abstract should include the purpose of the study and why it is an important area of inquiry, the problem statement, the type of approach used to address the research question(s), a brief description of the results, and the implications of the findings. It is important to remember that the abstract is in oftentimes the first source of information that one has concerning a study.

Theoretical Framework. The dissertation must reflect the student's understanding of the area of study. This will be most obvious in a thorough but defined literature review that clearly identifies a problem and leads logically to the research questions posed. The literature review should demonstrate a thorough understanding of the literature related to the chosen topic.

Questions. Research questions are the foundation of the dissertation. Questions must be both important to the field and answerable. Questions may be important in that they are timely, relate to practical problems, have significant implication for a wide audience, focus on a critical population, fill an identified gap in the literature, build on existing knowledge or theory in significant ways, clarify or build upon equivocal or as yet unreplicated findings, or result in new or better instrumentation, to name only a few. The student must make the case in the dissertation as to why a particular question is important.

Questions are answerable to the extent that they are neither too narrow nor too broad, data can be collected (or are available in archival form) and analyzed, and when the methods used to address them are scientifically appropriate and feasible.

Methodology. The student must demonstrate knowledge of research methodology in both (a) selecting and describing an appropriate research *design*, and (b) describing the research *methods* to be used to identify and select a sample, and collect and analyze data. This will be evident in their description of participants, data sources, instrumentation, data collection procedures, and plans for (and ultimately presentation of results of) data analyses.

Results. The dissertation must present the results of data analysis in a way that is clear and understandable, and provides direct answers to the research questions posed. Results must be described and presented in ways that are consistent with the methodology chosen. (This indicator does not apply to dissertation proposals).

Conclusions and/or Implications. The student must place findings in appropriate context, discuss how results do and do not answer the research questions posed, and discuss the implications of these findings for practice and further research. Limitations of the research study should also be discussed in the context of appropriate interpretation of findings, including but not limited to generalizability or transferability. (This indicator does not apply to dissertation proposals).

Writing. The dissertation must be written in a style and to a standard of quality that is commensurate with the professional literature in the student's area of study. This implies that all of the indicators above are met with regard to conceptualizing, implementing, and reporting an empirically sound research study, and further that the dissertation manuscript is written in a scholarly style and is free of grammatical, spelling, and typographical errors. In addition, proper attribution in the form of citations should be provided for ideas, wording, or the work of others that are used in the dissertation. Such references should be presented in an acceptable style (typically that of the American Psychological Association). Although dissertations are typically dramatically longer than a manuscript submitted to a scholarly journal for publication, the style and quality of writing should be consistent with that of manuscripts suitable for publication in the student's area of study.

Presentation. The presentation must be conducted in a style and to a standard of quality that is commensurate with scholarly presentations similar to those at conferences such as American Educational Research Association (AERA) and American Psychological Association (APA). Students should operate within an allotted timeframe as agreed upon with the committee chair (generally about 15-30 minutes). At a proposal defense, the majority of the presentation time should focus on the proposed methodology; at a final dissertation defense, the majority of time should be spent on results, conclusions, and implications.

Rating the Indicators

For each category described above, several statements are provided as general indicators of quality. Readers of the dissertation may rate each statement according to the following criteria. These ratings are meant as general guides only. They also require subjective judgments of committee members.

Acceptable. *Acceptable* implies that this aspect of the dissertation requires no further revision on the part of the student. In the case of dissertation proposals, a designation of acceptable implies that the dissertation study may proceed as proposed. In the case of final dissertations, faculty members are strongly encouraged to elaborate on this designation for dissertations that are of extraordinarily high quality. For example, if some aspect of the dissertation is exemplary in that it is consistent with the nature and quality of

the current published literature in the student’s area of study, specific comments about this should be made in the comments sections that follow each category or the general comments sections at the end of the quality indicators checklist.

Minor Revision Necessary. *Minor Revision Necessary* implies that while this aspect of the proposal or dissertation needs some correction, elaboration, or other improvement, it does meet a minimal standard of quality. At the proposal stage, this implies that while the issue should be addressed, the project may proceed. At a final dissertation defense this designation implies that while some revision of the dissertation manuscript is necessary, the dissertation merits a designation of “pass.” This presumes that any needed modifications or editing will be made within a time frame agreed upon with the chair.

Major Revision Necessary. *Major Revision Necessary* implies that this aspect of the dissertation does not meet a minimal standard of quality and must be corrected. At the proposal stage, this implies that the dissertation project should not proceed until the issue of concern is corrected. At a final dissertation defense, this implies that the issue must be corrected before the student receives a designation of “pass.”

Dissertation Quality Indicators Checklist

	Acceptable	Minor revisions	Major revisions
1. Abstract			
A. The purpose of the study and the importance of the work within the larger theoretical framework are clearly delineated.			
B. Identification of the specific problem(s) or issue(s) that the study is addressing are clearly tied to the study’s purpose.			
C. The methodology that was employed to address the study’s research questions are clearly presented.			
D. Overall results that were obtained are presented.			
E. The implication of the study’s findings and how the study’s findings fit within the larger theoretical framework is delineated.			
Comments:			

	Acceptable	Minor revisions	Major revisions
2. Theoretical Framework			
A. A clear statement of the problem is presented, with important and relevant concepts defined.			
B. A clear link is established between what is known (existing literature) and what needs to be known.			
C. The importance of the general topic and specific questions posed is made clear.			
Comments:			
3. Questions			
A. The research question(s) are clear and answerable.			
B. The questions posed can feasibly be addressed in the context of a dissertation.			
C. Posing and addressing the question(s) can be done in an ethical manner.			
Comments:			
4. Methodology			
A. The research design is described in detail, with particular attention to all variables to be addressed.			
B. The sample and/or sampling plan are described and are appropriate.			
C. <u>Procedures</u> for data collection are described in detail and are appropriate to the questions posed.			
D. Data collection tools (e.g., instruments, interview or observation guides) are described in detail and are appropriate.			
E. Data analysis plans are appropriate and are described in detail, with particular reference to the research question(s) posed.			
Comments:			

	Acceptable	Minor revisions	Major revisions
5. Results			
A. Results are presented clearly and concisely.			
B. Results answer the question(s) posed.			
Comments:			
6. Conclusions and Implications			
A. Results or findings are summarized clearly with direct reference to the research questions posed.			
B. Results or findings are placed in appropriate context in the broader area of study.			
C. The implications of findings for practice and for further research are discussed in detail.			
D. The limitations of the study are acknowledged and discussed in the context of interpreting findings (e.g., generalizability, transferability).			
Comments:			
7. Writing			
A. The dissertation is written in a scholarly manner that is consistent with the research literature in the student's field of study.			
B. The dissertation is free of grammatical, spelling, and typographical errors.			
C. The dissertation follows a structure and organization consistent with Curry guidelines for doctoral dissertations and APA or other acceptable style requirements. Proper attribution is given when the work of others is used or cited			
Comments:			

	Acceptable	Minor revisions	Major revisions
8. Presentation			
A. The student's oral presentation of the proposal or dissertation is clear and concise, and handouts or PowerPoint presentations enhance, rather than detract from, this clarity.			
B. The student's presentation and interaction with committee members (and/or audience) during an oral defense demonstrate his or her clear understanding of the topic, the relevant literature, and all aspects of the dissertation study			
C. The student presents the proposal or dissertation in a professional manner.			
Comments:			

11. What should I do if my dissertation proposal is judged unacceptable?

First, you should make an appointment with your dissertation chair to review the reasons for the judgment. Then you and your dissertation chair should either rethink and substantially revise the proposal you have submitted or discuss how to address a different topic. Resubmitting the same proposal with minor changes or changing the composition of your doctoral committee are not recommended strategies.

12. What should I do if my dissertation proposal is accepted?

If your proposal is judged acceptable as written, the next steps are obvious – secure IRB approval and begin preparing to collect data. If your proposal is judged acceptable with contingencies (i.e., with specified changes), then you should make the required changes as soon as possible. As soon as you have made all of the required changes and received approval (by your dissertation chair or by committee members) of any required changes, you should give each committee member a copy of the proposal and put a copy on file in your folder in the records office. Remember that you cannot be faulted later for following a research plan (proposal) that your doctoral committee has approved.

From the time you are officially admitted to a doctoral program until you have defended your dissertation proposal successfully, you are properly called a doctoral student. After you defend your proposal successfully, you are officially a *candidate* for the degree (Ed.D. or Ph.D.) for which you are working and may properly call yourself a doctoral candidate.

13. What is expected of me before, during, and after data collection?

Before you begin collecting data, you must have the approval of the IRB, as mentioned earlier. You must also have laid the groundwork for collecting your data from schools or other participating institutions. Remember that you alone are responsible for the security and safety of your data.

During data collection, you must maintain good relationships with your participants and manage data collection in ways that minimize intrusion into people's lives and maximize the protection of possible harm to the participants. You need to keep your dissertation chair informed of your progress in collecting data. You also need to make sure that you have all of your data in a back-up file. Failure to back up your data is an invitation to disaster. Back up your data frequently as you are obtaining them.

After you have all of your data, the analyses are your job. Depending on the nature of your project and the expectations you and your dissertation chair have set for feedback to your participants, you may present your findings to specified individuals immediately or wait until your dissertation has been written and approved.

14. What are my responsibilities in writing the dissertation?

You are responsible for submitting proofread drafts of your chapters to your dissertation chair and for preparing the final draft with editorial feedback from your chair. You are also responsible for constructing tables and figures as may be required, for writing as crisply and clearly as you can, for maintaining the integrity of the reference form you and your dissertation chair agreed is most appropriate, for integrating any new literature on your topic that may have appeared or that you may have found since your proposal defense, and for doing all of these in a timely fashion. You should give a copy of the final draft (incorporating your dissertation chair's feedback and with your dissertation chair's approval) to each member of your committee at least two weeks before your dissertation defense.

Again, remember the importance of back-up copies as you write. Some students have lost time needlessly because they failed to maintain back-up copies.

15. What should my dissertation chair and committee do as I write my dissertation?

Your dissertation chair is responsible for reading your draft(s), giving you editorial suggestions, and approving the draft you give to your committee members. Drafts with known flaws should not be given to committee members. The draft received by the committee should be as free from errors as possible. Remember, too, that the draft you give your committee members is "final" only in the sense that it contains no flaws that you or your dissertation chair have found. Committee members may have editorial suggestions that you will need to incorporate before you file the truly "final" dissertation.

Members of your committee other than your dissertation chair need to do nothing but wait for you to give them the final draft. Then they must read your dissertation before your defense, and you must make sure that you give them adequate time (at least two weeks).

16. What should I expect of my dissertation chair and committee?

Your dissertation chair should be available at reasonable times for consultation and should give you explicit feedback on drafts of materials you give to him or her within a reasonable time. "Reasonable" is difficult to define precisely to cover all cases, but if you find it impossible to schedule time with your dissertation chair, receive only vague feedback on your drafts of material, or must wait much longer than the time agreed to by your dissertation chair for feedback, then you are not being well advised and may want to consider changing your dissertation chair. You may contact the Department Chair or the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs to discuss your situation and possible solutions.

Your committee members should be reasonably available for meetings with you and with other committee members and should have read the documents you have given them within the agreed upon time. If a member of your committee is unwilling or unable to fulfill these expectations, then you may want to discuss replacement of that committee member with your dissertation chair.

Keep in mind that faculty members may be even busier than you are and that neither your dissertation chair nor your committee members must be expected to give you priority over everything else. Remember also that your dissertation chair and committee members may experience unexpected or emergency events in their lives that prevent them from accomplishing particular tasks related to your dissertation on schedule.

The dissertation process demands accommodation on your part as well as on the part of faculty. Demands for high quality work from you are to be expected and are not sufficient grounds for changing dissertation chairs or committee members.

17. What should my dissertation chair and committee expect of me?

Your dissertation chair and committee members should expect high quality work, meticulous attention to detail, and timely presentation of documents from you. They will expect that you have proofread your work carefully before submitting it to them. They will expect that you carry out the project as they have approved it in your proposal unless they give explicit approval to any substantive changes. They also should expect your timely communication with them about your progress on the project you are undertaking. Communicating regularly with your dissertation chair and all members of your committee at all stages of the process, including the interval between approval of your proposal and your defense of the dissertation, is critically important.

18. What should I expect at my dissertation defense?

As was the case for your proposal defense, you must schedule your defense with your dissertation chair at a time acceptable to each member of your committee. You must reserve a room, allowing two hours for the defense. Again, your dissertation chair will be in charge of the meeting. You will be expected to give a brief summary of your project, not to exceed 30 minutes. This should include the following:

- why your research is important
- the question(s) you asked
- what you did
- how you measured or assessed outcomes
- how you analyzed your data
- what you found
- the meaning of your findings
- next steps or needed research, given your findings

Rehearse this presentation. Make sure that your presentation is coherent and complete but succinct and polished. As was true for your proposal defense, a poor presentation gets you off to a bad start. (Remember, too, that in interviewing for jobs, at least for jobs in higher education, you will need to have prepared a presentation on your dissertation for an audience of faculty and doctoral students.)

After your presentation, each member of your committee will be given the opportunity to ask questions or make comments. The questions you are asked may or may not be related to your dissertation, although most or all are likely to be about your dissertation. Your dissertation chair, as moderator of the meeting, may intervene if he or she considers any questions out of order.

Remember that the defense of your dissertation should not be about the acceptability of your proposal – what you did and why you did it. That was settled in your proposal defense. This defense is a defense of how you interpret your findings. Your examining committee will be interested in why you reached the conclusions you did, alternative conclusions that someone might offer, and what you see as next logical steps in the line of research to which you have contributed.

After all committee members have had the opportunity to ask questions or make comments, your dissertation chair will ask you and anyone present other than committee members to leave the room while the committee deliberates. The committee's deliberation may last as long as 30 minutes. After the committee's deliberation, your dissertation chair will recall you to the room and convey to you the committee's decision.

The committee may arrive at any of the following decisions:

- a. Your dissertation defense was not acceptable.
- b. Your dissertation defense was acceptable with specified changes in the document that must be seen by each committee member before they are willing to sign the Record of Progress and the signature page.

- c. Your dissertation defense was acceptable with specified changes in the final document to be made as noted by your dissertation chair.
- d. Your dissertation defense was acceptable to the committee, and no changes need to be made in the final document.

You are expected to bring your Record of Progress and signature (approval) pages to the dissertation defense so that if your dissertation is approved your dissertation chair and the committee members can sign all necessary documents at that time. Approval of the dissertation is the last step in your program, other than filing the document. If your dissertation is approved, you may assume that you have earned the degree for which your dissertation was submitted as soon as you file it officially in the Curry School.

19. What should I do if I do not defend my dissertation successfully?

If the judgment of the committee is that you have not defended your dissertation successfully, then you need to schedule a meeting with your dissertation chair as soon as possible and review with him or her the reasons for the negative judgment. If you did what you proposed to do and your proposal was judged acceptable, then the decision must be based on your presentation, your writing, or your responses to questions. Given careful analysis of the reasons for your failure, you should attempt to correct your presentation, writing, or responsiveness to questions and reschedule the defense. If you need to make changes in the dissertation based on flaws in the written document, then remember that you need to provide your committee with a redrafted document, approved by your dissertation chair for distribution to the committee, at least two weeks prior to the rescheduled defense. Your committee will want you to be successful. Remember that their sympathies are with you, and be gracious in responding to their suggestions.

20. By what date must I defend my dissertation to participate in a graduation?

If you wish to be part of the spring graduation ceremony (i.e., be listed in the program and march in the procession), then the deadline for a successful defense is April 1. For summer graduation, the deadline is July 1, and for graduation at the end of the fall term the deadline is November 15. If revisions are required by the committee, as is usually the case, then you must revise the dissertation to the satisfaction of your dissertation committee members. Once your committee members have signed the dissertation signature page, submit the revised dissertation the Admissions Office, Curry School of Education for final approval and to all committee members. Your final step is to take your approved dissertation to the Alderman Copy Center for printing by May 1 for May graduation, August 1 for August graduation and December 1 for January graduation.

Remember, however, that you may participate in any graduation ceremony subsequent to the one for which you meet the deadline (e.g., if you defend your dissertation on April 15, then you may participate in the summer graduation ceremony). Also remember that after you defend your dissertation successfully and put the document on file, you may consider yourself to have earned the degree (i.e., you are not required to participate in a graduation ceremony; the degree has been earned when you have completed all requirements for it).

The deadlines listed apply to *successfully completed* defenses. That is, if the defense is judged “conditional,” in that certain changes are required before committee members will sign the Record of Progress and the dissertation signature page, then the changes must be made and the signatures obtained by the deadline.

21. What should I do after defending my dissertation successfully?

Celebrate! But also make any necessary changes in the document, follow the instructions for registering your dissertation with University Microfilms at the University of Virginia’s Printing Services, file the dissertation with the University as instructed, and order bound copies of the dissertation for **each** member of your committee. The sooner you have nothing more at all to do to complete your responsibilities as a student, the better. (See Part III for details on final preparation of our dissertation.)

No reward is due your dissertation chair or committee for their service, other than your thanks. However, if you wish to present your dissertation chair or committee members with a celebration or other gift, do so – and make mention of such – only after you have defended your dissertation successfully.

22. When may I begin using the degree (Ed.D. or Ph.D.) after my name?

You may begin using the degree after your name as soon as you have successfully defended your dissertation and filed the document with the Curry School.

PART III: GUIDELINES FOR DISSERTATION MANUSCRIPT PREPARATION

Style and Typing of the Dissertation

These guidelines are based on the APA style but differ in certain areas, as outlined below. This is the modified APA style for dissertations and theses in the Curry School. The purpose of these guidelines is to assist graduate students with the formatting, preparation, and submission of dissertations. Please note that other formats may be used with your committee's approval. It is important to be consistent in style, notation, form, etc.

Formatting of Dissertation

The two copies of the dissertation must be submitted to the Curry School on 20-pound weight, with at least 25% cotton rag content and acid-free paper (with a watermark). The Copy Centers throughout the University have the required paper and are familiar with thesis/dissertation copying should you choose to use their services. (You may submit one copy on regular typing paper that can then be taken to Alderman Library and copied onto the acceptable paper.)

Fonts/Typeface

A standard font of 10 or 12 points is acceptable. Standard fonts include Arial, Courier, Times New Roman, etc. – the requirement is "good, clear copy." The same typeface should be used throughout with the exception of tables. Symbols not available on the typewriter/computer may be neatly lettered by hand with black drawing ink. There is also special available for purchase for certain symbols.

Margins and Spacing

Your dissertation must have the following uniform margins. These margins apply to all charts, graphs, tables, and figures. It may be necessary to reduce the size of graphs, table, charts, etc. to meet this requirement.

Top:	2" for the first page of each chapter; 1" for all other pages
Bottom:	1"
Left:	1 ½"
Right:	1"

The text of your dissertation must be double-spaced. Your footnotes or endnotes should be single-spaced. Extended direct quotations (more than 40 words) should be single-spaced and indented (a minimum of five spaces) for each entry, with proper citations.

Pagination

Preliminary pages should be numbered with lower-case Roman numerals (i, ii, iii, etc.) at the bottom and center of each page, 1" from the bottom edge. The title page, copyright page, and signature page should be counted when numbering successive pages, but the

number should not appear on that page. The first page to receive lower-case Roman numeral “iv” would be the dedication page if you had a copyright page. See below for a complete list of how each page should be numbered.

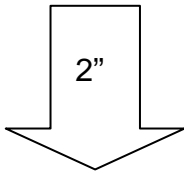
Begin numbering the text with Arabic numerals (1, 2, 3, etc.) at the start of the first page of text, 1” from the top right of the page. Some prefer to number the first page of each chapter by placing the number centered 1” from the bottom of the page.

Footnotes/Endnotes: (see APA manual)

References: (see APA manual)

Dissertation Pages – Order and Numbering Sequence

Title page	Number assigned but NOT typed
Copyright page	Number assigned but NOT typed
Abstract	Number NOT assigned or typed
Signature page	Number assigned but NOT typed
Dedication page	Roman numeral, numbered consecutively Beginning with “iv”
Acknowledgement page	Small Roman numeral, numbered consecutively
Table of Contents	Small Roman numeral, numbered consecutively
List of Tables	Small Roman numeral, numbered consecutively
List of Figures	Small Roman numeral, numbered consecutively
Text (Chapter I)	Arabic numeral, numbered consecutively Beginning with “1”
Body of dissertation	Arabic numeral, numbered consecutively
Bibliography/References	Arabic numeral, numbered consecutively
Appendix/Appendices	Arabic numeral, numbered consecutively



[Example of title page]

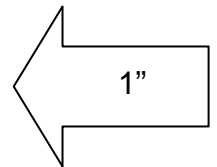
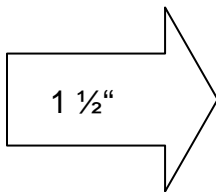
TITLE

A Dissertation

Presented to

The Faculty of the Curry School of Education

University of Virginia



In Partial Fulfillment

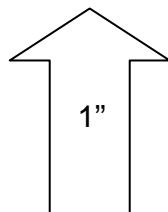
of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education or Doctor of Philosophy

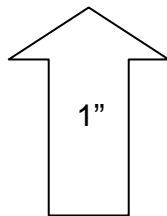
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Name, degrees

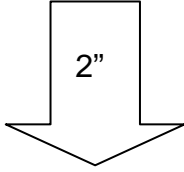
Month and year degree will be conferred



[Example of copyright page]



© Copyright by
Your Name
All Rights Reserved
Month & Year of Graduation



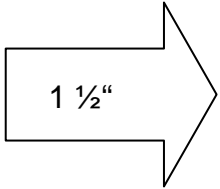
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Name of Department
Curry School of Education
University of Virginia
Charlottesville, Virginia

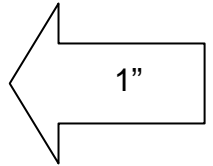
APPROVAL OF THE DISSERTATION

This dissertation, ("title"), has been approved by the Graduate Faculty of the Curry School of Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of [Doctor of Education or Doctor of Philosophy].

Name of Major Advisor, Advisor (insert name)



Committee Member Name (insert name)

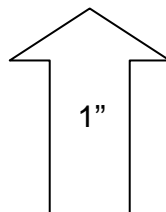


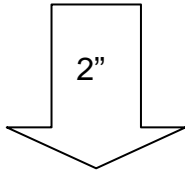
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Committee Member Name (insert name)

Committee Member Name (insert name)

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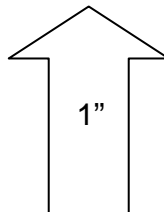
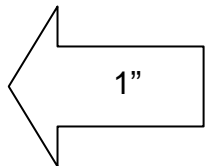
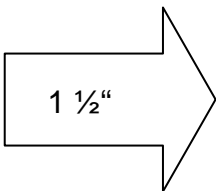


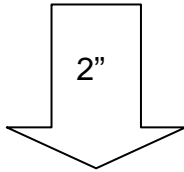


[Example of table of contents]

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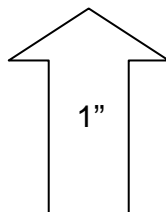
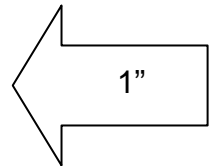
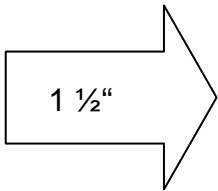


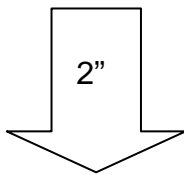


[Example of list of tables]

LIST OF TABLES

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[Example of margins, headings, etc.]

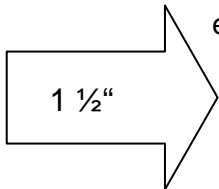
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE (heading 1)

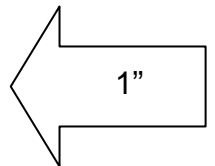
The purpose of this chapter was to present a review of the literature and to outline the need for a study on the status of the recertification of school district superintendents. Many sources were used to develop a comprehensive review of the literature.

Recommendations Included in the Reform Reports (heading 2)

It has been said that a school administrator can be compared to the leader of a symphony orchestra. The person who holds the title of conductor is responsible for the effective operation of the orchestra and is looked to for direction and leadership.

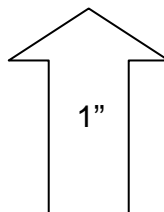


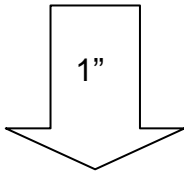
Overview of Needs Identified for Recertification Programs for Superintendents (heading 3)



The superintendency of schools is one of the most important positions in the community, and more than any other individual, influences the direction of public education.

The superintendent has a basic role in determining what will become of the young people of his community and through them what his community and the nation will become (Educational Policies Commission, 1965, p. 1).





(page number)

The responsibilities inherent in the job of a public school superintendent demand and require a basic knowledge of all areas of school administration (Educational Policies Commission, 1965).

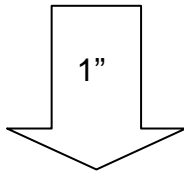
Definitions (heading 4)

Within the context of this study, the following definitions were used:

AASA (heading 5) The American Association of School Administrators, commonly abbreviated as AASA, refers to the national organization of professionals from the field of educational administration.

Certification. The term, certification, means that the profession pronounces the certificate holder fully competent to perform at a high professional standard.

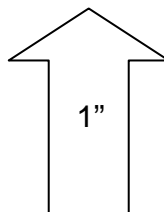
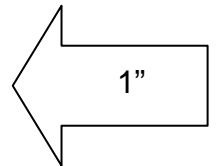
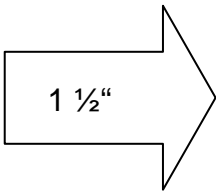
Educational administrator. The term, educational administrator, refers to a person employed in an official administrative leadership position such as a superintendency.

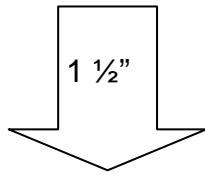


[Example of vertical table]

Table 1
Descriptive and Exercise Training Characteristics of Nonrunning Control (CONTL) Group and Eumenorrheic (EUMNE), Oligomenorrheic (OLIGO), and Amenorrheic (AMENO) Runner Groups

Variable	CONTL (n=10-11)	EUMEN (n=21)	OLIGO (n=6-8)	AMENO (n=9=10)
Age	29.3±6.3	30.7±6.8	23.5±4.5	23.1±4.4
Height	163.3±8.0	164.6±5.3	166.0±2.8	171.5±7.7
Weight	61.0±7.9	57.2±5.2	57.6±5.0	59.2±8.2
% Body Fat	28.4±5.5	20.4±3.9	23.0±3.7	21.4±3.9

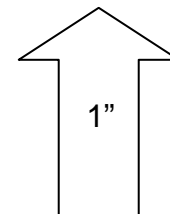
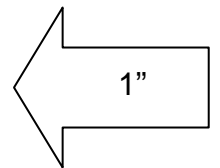
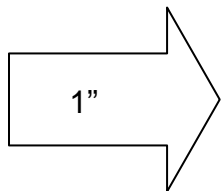


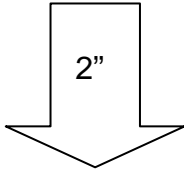


[Example of horizontal table]

Table 1
Descriptive and Exercise Training Characteristics of Nonrunning Control (CONTL) Group and Eumenorrheic (EUMNE), Oligomenorrheic (OLIGO), and Amenorrheic (AMENO) Runner Groups

Variable	CONTL (n=10-11)	EUMEN (n=21)	OLIGO (n=6-8)	AMENO (n=9=10)	OLIGO (n=6-8)	AMENO (n=9=10)
Age	29.3±6.3	30.7±6.8	23.5±4.5	23.1±4.4	23.5±4.5	23.1±4.4
Height	163.3±8.0	164.6±5.3	166.0±2.8	171.5±7.7	166.0±2.8	171.5±7.7
Weight	61.0±7.9	57.2±5.2	57.6±5.0	59.2±8.2	57.6±5.0	59.2±8.2
% Body Fat	28.4±5.5	20.4±3.9	23.0±3.7	21.4±3.9	23.0±3.7	21.4±3.9





[Example of references page]

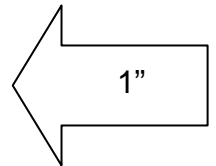
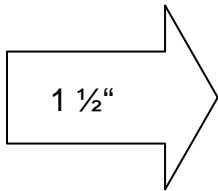
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Ball, A. (1997). Expanding the dialogue on culture as a critical component when assessing writing. *Assessing Writing* 4(2), 169-202.



Post Dissertation Defense Checklist and Fees

The final copy of the dissertation with all approval signatures should be submitted to the Admissions Office, Curry School of Education before the specified deadline for doctoral dissertations. The deadlines are May 1 for May graduation, August 1 for August graduation and December 1 for January graduation. The following materials should be submitted to the Admissions Office:

- Two copies of the final dissertation for inspection (or one copy that can be taken to Alderman Library Copy Center and copied onto the required paper).
- One copy of title page and abstract
- Completed Record of Progress form
- Copy of IRB approval letter (if applicable)
- Microfilm agreement form (available in 104 Ruffner)
- Survey of Earned Doctorates form (available in 104 Ruffner)

PLEASE NOTE: If you know you are not going to make the graduation deadline and need to come off the degree list please let the Admissions Office know as soon as possible.

Upon approval by the Admissions Office the dissertation should be taken to the Photography Division of Printing Services, 1st Floor, Alderman Library. The following is required by Printing Services:

- a. A manila envelope for each copy (DO NOT USE BINDERS OR BOXES) with the following information written on the outside of each envelope:
 - (1) full name of student.
 - (2) short title composed of 36 letters and spaces or fewer. This is what will be printed on the spine of the binding. Thirty-six (36) letters and spaces are maximum.
 - (3) Date of graduation (month and year).
 - (4) Degree and school (example: Ed.D., Curry School of Education).
- b. Two copies of your approved dissertation inspected by the Admissions Office. (Printing Services can make copies if desired. Prices for copying on approved paper are **\$.085/page**. Copying prices for additional copies on regular bond paper is \$.055/page.)
- c. A copy of the abstract and title page should accompany the completed Microfilm Agreement form. The fee for microfilming the dissertation and publishing the abstract is **\$75.00**.

- d. If you decide to get your dissertation copyrighted, you must have a page in the beginning of your dissertation stating that it is copyrighted. Copyright cost is **\$50**.
- e. Printing Services will mail personal copies to students if desired at **\$7.00** per book (more if outside US). Binding cost is **\$17.50** per book.

Complete list of fees (do not fill out check prior to turning in your dissertation to Alderman Library as cost may vary)

Microfilming	\$ 75.00
Binding (per copy)	\$ 17.50
Copyright	\$ 50.00 (optional)
Copying on bond paper	\$.055/page
Copying on thesis paper	\$.085/page
Color copies	\$.79/page
Digital Submission	\$ 10.00

PLEASE NOTE: PRINTING SERVICES CANNOT, WITHOUT EXCEPTION, ACCEPT ANY DISSERTATION WITHOUT FULL PAYMENT OF ALL FEES AND UNLESS ALL THE REQUIREMENTS ABOVE ARE MET. IF YOU CANNOT DELIVER YOUR WORK, ARRANGEMENTS MUST BE MADE WITH YOUR DEPARTMENT IN ADVANCE TO MAIL YOUR WORK TO THEM FOR DELIVERY TO PRINTING SERVICES WITH ALL FEES AND PAPERS. MAKE ALL CHECKS PAYABLE TO "PRINTING SERVICES." PLEASE DO NOT USE ANY OF THE EASY ERASE PAPERS FOR THE ORIGINAL; THEY DO NOT HOLD UP WELL AND ARE DIFFICULT TO MICROFILM PROPERLY. YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR CORRECT PAGINATION AND FORMAT, EVEN OF YOUR PHOTOCOPIES. WE WILL NOT CHECK IT BEFORE BINDING.

APPENDIX:

DESCRIPTION OF THE MANUSCRIPT-STYLE DISSERTATION

Some, but not all, Curry School program areas offer an alternative dissertation called the manuscript-style dissertation. The manuscript-style dissertation option offers an alternative to students who intend to pursue academic careers and would like to be well positioned to acquire their first job. This option will be as or more rigorous than the traditional dissertation. Not all students are eligible for this option.

Students select this option in collaboration with their dissertation chairs. Students' dissertation committees must also approve this option. It is the shared responsibility of the advisor and dissertation committee or tailor the option to students' program areas and the students' specific needs, and also, to ensure that the students' products demonstrate sufficient quality for graduation.

Students selecting this option typically begin to develop a line of research in their first year(s) of graduate school. Each paper described below must represent a unique contribution to the field.

Minimum dissertation requirements are described below. Other variations are acceptable. Again, the responsibility rests with the committee to ensure quality and standards that are comparable to or higher than the traditional dissertation.

Option 1

- 2 research papers in which the student has taken a lead role, ready to submit (or submitted) to reputable, refereed journals
- 1 additional research paper to which the student has contributed, ready to submit (or submitted) to a reputable journal.
- 1 additional document that demonstrates the conceptual links among these manuscripts

Option 2

- a complete traditional literature review
- 2 research papers in which the student has taken a lead role, ready to submit (or submitted) to reputable, refereed journals

Procedures for the Manuscript-Style Dissertation

Dissertation proposal. In preparation for the dissertation proposal meeting, the student is required to:

- Propose that the/she would like to aim for the manuscript-style dissertation, reflecting a decision between the student and his/her advisor
 - For option 1: Submit at least one completed manuscript (ready to submit, submitted, or in press) in which the student took a lead role, as well as a proposal for the final manuscript(s).
 - For option 2: Submit a complete traditional literature review as well as a proposal for the final manuscript(s).
- Submit a letter from at least one co-author per paper describing the students' role in conduction the study and writing the manuscript.

At the dissertation proposal meeting, the committee approval consists of:

- Approval of whether the student is eligible for the manuscript-style dissertation or whether the student should complete a traditional dissertation.
 - For option 1: Approval of at least one completed manuscript (submitted or in press) and the proposal for the final manuscript(s).
 - For option 2: Approval of the literature review, possibly one manuscript (submitted or in press) and the proposal for the final manuscript(s).
- Approval of the journals to which these papers will be/have been submitted.
- Decision on which products will be the focus of the discussion at the dissertation defense.

Dissertation defense. In preparation for the dissertation defense, the student is required to:

- Submit all required documents.
- Submit letters from at least one co-author per paper describing the students' role in conducting the study and writing the manuscript.
- Prepare a discussion of all or some of the final products (depending on the specification of the dissertation committee).

At the dissertation defense, the committee approval consists of:

- Approval of the quality of the work, as in a traditional defense.