

DISSERTATION GUIDELINES

**Center for Psychological Studies
Nova Southeastern University**

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I. INITIATING THE DISSERTATION PROCESS

The dissertation is the culmination of the Ph.D. student's research training and the student's entry into a research or academic career. It is done under the supervision of faculty, but it is to be substantially the student's independent, original work, properly citing ideas or quotes from other sources. It is to be a study of publishable quality. Like all published studies, it can answer only certain questions, but it also demonstrates the student's scholarship, research acumen, and writing ability, all of which are predictive of subsequent research competence.

Registration for Dissertation

In order to register for Dissertation, the student must complete a Prospectus signed by a Chairperson. The form may be obtained from and, when completed returned to, the Academic Affairs Office. The student is to enroll for six credits in each of two semesters. If dissertation is not complete, the student must register each fall and winter semester for one credit of Continuing Dissertation until complete.

Dissertation Committee

When forming the committee, the student must submit a completed Dissertation Committee form (obtained from the Dean's office of the CPS website) for approval by the Director of Academic Affairs (DAA) and the Dean. Each committee member must be approved on the basis of eligibility and expertise in the topic area. A member from outside the full-time faculty may be added with the *Committee chair's endorsement* and approval by the the DAA and the Dean.

The student should discuss first with the chair and then with committee members procedures to be followed. Early discussions and drafts may involve only the chair or some or all committee members. The student should ascertain expected turn-around times (which may vary with time of year) for each committee member to return drafts.

II. DEVELOPING AND WRITING THE DISSERTATION PROPOSAL

After the formation of the dissertation committee, the student must develop a formal dissertation proposal. While different committees may function in slightly different ways, the student should first discuss the research problem for the dissertation with the committee chairperson and the committee members. The student should confer with the committee as to how to proceed with the proposal.

Dissertation proposals should contain at least three major sections. These are:

- I. Statement of the Problem
- II. Review of the Literature
- III. Method

With the committee's approval, these may be written as the *first three chapters* of the dissertation. Alternatively, they may be written as a proposal rather than in chapter form. Students should discuss with their committees which approach to use. Proposals must be written in APA style in accordance with the current *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (i.e., double-spaced draft format except for references).

Statement of the Problem

The first section of the proposal should provide the introduction to the problem to be addressed by the dissertation research. The problem statement should cite relevant literature as necessary to support the existence of the problem plus pertinent background information. At the conclusion of the problem statement, the reader should have a clear understanding of the problem to be addressed by the dissertation.

Review of the Literature

This section should *critically review* the literature relevant to the dissertation problem. The extent of the review is in part determined by the committee, but all relevant research directly bearing on the dissertation problem should be included. Every effort should be made to include the most recent relevant literature. Historic literature should be included to the extent that it is directly relevant.

At the conclusion of the literature review, there should be a statement to the effect: “The problem addressed by the proposed research is...” This statement should be followed by either the specific research hypotheses *or* by the research questions. Hypotheses in null form are not appropriate.

Method

While all aspects of the proposal are important, the method section is critical since it presents the details of the research process. While the exact content of this section will vary as a function of the nature of the particular research, generally the method section should include the following topics:

1. Subjects or participants (numbers, characteristics, population sample, selection criteria, etc.)
2. Measures (detailed descriptions; if tests, are to be employed include indices of reliability and validity).
3. Treatments (if independent variable(s) is/are manipulated)
4. Procedures (give sufficient detail for an independent researcher to replicate the study).

5. Analyses (describe the proposed analytic process whether graphical, statistical, or other).

In general, the student should assume that the readers of the proposal are knowledgeable psychologists, but ones who may not be experts in the particular area addressed by the proposal.

It is desirable for the student to have run pilot studies as part of the proposal. The purpose of the pilot work should be to familiarize the student with the subject characteristics and the methods and to demonstrate the feasibility of the procedures. It is not uncommon for proposals to be modified after running pilot studies.

III. DEFENDING THE DISSERTATION PROPOSAL

The following guidelines are to be observed in the defense process both for the proposal and the final dissertation:

1. The student must secure the approval of all committee members to schedule a defense and identify a time agreeable to all of them.
2. The final version of the proposal must be distributed to the Committee at least two weeks prior to the defense.
3. An official notice of the defense must be posted two weeks prior to the defense. The student should provide the information to Word Processing, which will secure a room, do the posting, and distribute an abstract to the faculty.
4. A formal defense must involve a public in person presentation open to all faculty and students of the School of Psychology. Others may attend at the discretion of the dissertation chair. The study is described in detail, and then the committee addresses questions to the student. At the chair's discretion, others in attendance may be recognized to ask questions.
5. After the presentation, the psychology faculty present and the committee will remain in the room for discussion. All others including the dissertation student, will be excused. Faculty will be polled for comments. Any decision about modifications remains with the committee members.
6. It is the responsibility of the committee chair to see that any modifications agreed upon by the committee are accurately recorded.
7. If the defense is successful, a memo from the chair should be written to the Dean of the School of Psychology stating that the proposal has been accepted, with copies to the Director of Academic Affairs and the student.
8. A file copy of the proposal with any modification should be maintained by the Dissertation Chair.

9. If the written document and/or the defense are not acceptable to the committee, the student must make all requested revisions in the proposal and schedule a new defense repeating the above steps.

IV. CONDUCTING THE DISSERTATION RESEARCH

Following a successful proposal defense, and prior to submitting the proposal study to the Institutional Research Board for approval, the student must complete CITI training. (See IRB guidelines and forms on the CPS homepage sites of interest.) If the IRB requires any changes, the student must present these to the committee for its approval. The student should allow sufficient time for IRB approval before beginning the research.

Following a successful proposal defense and IRB approval, the student may begin the research, incorporating any modifications resulting from the defense. It is important that the student follows proposed procedures to the extent possible. In the event procedures must be modified, such changes should be cleared with the student's committee in order to avoid problems with the final defense.

The student's Dissertation Chair is responsible for monitoring the use of research data to protect the originality of the dissertation. The Dissertation Chair is also responsible to approve or disapprove requests by others in or out of the school to use the student's data prior to publication of the dissertation by the University, that is, when bound dissertation is submitted to the library and made available to the public. (see student Handbook for full policy).

V. WRITING THE DISSERTATION

The student must adhere to the following guidelines in preparing the completed dissertation. It must be written in the style specified by the American Psychological Association and this document. For the most part, the guidelines in this document have been adapted from the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*. It is the student's responsibility to see that the dissertation is in the proper format. Looking at previous dissertations usually will be helpful, but the final authority is the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*.

The student should read the section in the *Publication Manual* on dissertations (current edition). Note that most of the *Publication Manual* guidelines are for submitting a manuscript to an editor, whereas the dissertation is a final publication, like a book. Drafts to the chair and the committee should be double-spaced and need not follow all of the guidelines below; however, the final copy distributed to the committee and the approved version to be bound must adhere to all of these guidelines. The guidelines in this document supersede those of the *Publication Manual* on a number of points, consistent with the dissertation's being a final publication.

The dissertation should consist of the sections shown in Table 1. Variations from the above five chapters are permissible but should be cleared in advance with the student's committee.

Table I

Sections of the Dissertation

Title Page

Approval Page

Acknowledgments

Table of Contents

List of tables

List of figures

Abstract

Chapter I: Statement of the Problem

Chapter II: Review of the Literature

Chapter III: Method

Chapter IV: Results

Chapter V: Discussion

References

Appendices

Acknowledgments

This section should note anyone who has contributed to the formulation and conduct of the dissertation, including faculty members and other students. It also should acknowledge any permissions granted to quote from published works or to use unpublished measures or protocols. Note that CPS follows the APA guideline of requiring permission to quote 500 words or more (Cumulative words if more than one quote from a single source). In such cases the student must secure and show to the dissertation chair letters of permission received from the copyright holder (publisher or author).

Title and Abstract

The title of the dissertation should describe the Study and contain the appropriate key words. The number of words in the title should not exceed 15. The maximum length for a dissertation abstract is 350 words in keeping with the guideline of *Dissertation Abstracts International*. Abstracts should summarize adequately the problem, method, results, and the conclusions.

Figures, Table, and Footnotes

These are to be placed at the appropriate point in the text within the body of the dissertation (not at the end). Short tables may appear on a page with some text. Each long table and each figure are to be placed on a separate page immediately following the first reference to them. Large tables should be typed on larger paper and reduced to the proper size by photocopying. Figure captions are typed below the figure, or in some cases, on the preceding or facing page (it is preferable to have captions on the same page). Footnotes to the text are typed at the bottom of the page on which they are referenced; footnotes should be used sparingly, if at all (See *Publication Manual*).

Appendices

Although space usually limits the use of appendices in journal articles, the need for complete documentation often dictates their inclusion in a dissertation. The following materials are appropriate for appendices: verbatim instructions to subjects, consent forms, and instruments scales or questionnaires developed for the study (not previously published ones). Other materials may be included as necessary, to explain the study and to permit independent replications. If possible, merge word-processed files for these documents into the dissertation; if original materials are used, page numbers must be typed onto them.

VI. TYPING THE DISSERTATION

Margins

The left-hand margin must be one and one-half inches; the top, side, and bottom margins must be a minimum of one inch. The top margin on the first page of a new chapter may be larger than other margins. It is essential that the margin requirements be carefully observed because some of each margin is trimmed in the binding process.

Fonts

Do not use script or other unusual font types; these do not reproduce properly. Use Times Roman 12 point font. Use italics instead of underlining for book titles, etc. Use bold for all headings. No corrections are permitted on the printed pages: any pages requiring corrections must be retyped and reprinted. The final appearance must be clean and professional.

Spacing and Justification

As per the APA Publication Manual guidelines, double-spacing is required throughout the final version of the dissertation. Long quotations should be indented five spaces. Full justification should be used to provide a professional-looking document. Single-spacing can be used for table titles and headings, figure captions, references (double-spacing is required between references), footnotes, and long quotations.

Pagination

Two sets of page numbers are to be used in the dissertation. The preliminary pages (from the title page up to the body of the study) should be numbered with lower case Roman numerals (as is common in books). The second set of numbers begins with the first page of Chapter I and continues throughout the study, references, and appendices. These numbers are Arabic.

Every page of the study must be assigned a number even though that number may be suppressed on some pages. In the set of Roman numerals the title page is given a number but does not appear. Thereafter each preliminary page must show Roman numerals centered at the bottom of the page. In the set of Arabic numerals, no number appears on the Abstract but is printed on all subsequent pages in the upper right corner.

Headings

There are five levels of headings:

Upper-case: centered

Upper and lower-case: centered

Upper and lower-case: italic, centered

Upper and lower-case: italic, left-justified

Upper and lower-case, indented paragraph heading followed by period.: italic

All headings should be bolded. (See sample p.16)

Printing

Laser-jet quality printing is required.

VII. DEFENDING THE FINAL DISSERTATION

It is advisable that the student maintain frequent contact with the committee chairperson and with the committee members throughout the dissertation process in order to obtain ongoing feedback regarding the research. With the consent of the chairperson, the final defense may be scheduled. All defenses must proceed according to the same guidelines as listed for the proposal defense with the following substitutions:

1. If the committee accepts both the dissertation and the student's defense of it, each member will sign the dissertation approval sheet. The sheet should be dated the day of the defense. The approval sheet should be held by the chairperson of the dissertation committee until all revisions, if any, are completed. At that time, the chair should date and sign the final approval section of the approval sheet. This will constitute the official date of completion of the dissertation.
2. When the Chairperson of the dissertation committee is satisfied that all revisions (if any) have been made and that the dissertation is ready for binding, he/she will submit a research completion form with an attached abstract to the Academic Affairs office.

VIII. BINDING AND SUBMITTING THE DISSERTATION

It is mandatory that the dissertation be reviewed for appropriate form by the Office of the Dean prior to submission for binding. The Dean's Office will also provide the name of the binding company approved by the school. **It is the responsibility of the student to pay for typing and binding the dissertation.** The following are instructions for the binding process:

1. The dissertation must be bound in dark blue.
2. The title and author's name is to be printed on the front of the bound copy.
3. The word "Dissertation" and the author's last name must appear on the spine.
4. A gold line should appear at the top and bottom of the spine.
5. Bond paper with a minimum of-25% rag content must be used for the original copy and for photocopies. Strathmore bond (or equivalent) 20 lb. paper should be used. This paper quality is necessary for the printing of the dissertation to be durable.
6. Three bound copies are required to be submitted to the Office of the Dean for distribution to the library and to the Chairperson of the Committee. The third copy is retained by the Office of the Dean of the School of Psychology.

IX. UPLOADING YOUR DISSERTATION TO UMI

In addition to the three copies submitted to the Office of the Dean, students are required to submit their dissertation to UMI.

Following review for appropriate format by the Office of the Dean, students are required to submit their dissertations to UMI (Dissertation Abstracts International). A standard fee of \$55 for the archiving of the dissertation is applied to all submissions.

During the submission process, you will have the option to request that ProQuest/UMI file for copyright on your behalf. If you choose this option, there will be an additional \$45 fee. It is **HIGHLY** recommended that you choose this option.

All fees are paid by credit card directly to ProQuest/UMI at the time of submission.

For information on submitting your dissertation to UMI visit their website, <http://www.umi.com/hp/Support/DServices/prepare/>, or call (800) 521-0600, extension 7020. They provide a free copy of *Publishing Your Doctoral Dissertation*.

Upon receipt of the bound copies and confirmation of submission to UMI, degree application will be approved and released.

X. DEGREE APPLICATION

The [Online Application for Degree/Diploma](#) must be completed.

Your bound copies must be received by the Office of the Dean

The submission of your dissertation to UMI is confirmed.

Your degree application and payment must be submitted electronically.

All financial obligations to the university must be paid before the degree is conferred.

XI. SAMPLE FORMS AND PAGES

PROSPECTUS FOR DISSERTATION

Student must present this completed form when FIRST registering for Dissertation. All subsequent registrations will fall under this Prospectus. This does not replace the “DISSERTATION COMMITTEE APPROVAL FORM” required by the Dean's Office. (See Dissertation Guidelines)

DESCRIPTION:

NOTE: It is assumed you will be the Principal Investigator (PI) of a research study, which requires IRB approval. Check below as needed.

I will be PI,
 I will not be PI of a research study. Explanation:

I acknowledge that I am responsible for securing approval if I am the PI signing below.

| | | |
|------------------------|-----------|------|
| Student (Please Print) | Signature | Date |
|------------------------|-----------|------|

| | | |
|---------------------------|-----------|------|
| Supervisor (Please Print) | Signature | Date |
|---------------------------|-----------|------|

DISSERTATION COMMITTEE

APPROVAL FORM

(Sample)

Date _____

I _____ have successfully completed (Name of Student) all the necessary requirements in order to formulate my dissertation committee. The dissertation title is:

My proposed dissertation committee is as follows:

_____ Chairperson

Each of the above faculty members has agreed to serve on my dissertation committee.

Student's Signature

Approved:

Karen Grosby
Dean

cc: Student
Dissertation Committee Members
Director of Academic Affairs

RESEARCH COMPLETION FORM

The supervising faculty member must properly date and return this form with the grade for a final research course (directed study/dissertation). If it is the last requirement, date of final approval becomes the date for the student's completing the program. This is an important date; for students who have completed all their requirements this date marks the transition to postdoctoral experience.

PSY.D. DIRECTED STUDY

STUDENT NAME: _____
(Please print)

DATE OF FINAL APPROVAL Abstract must be attached, which will be forwarded to the Dean's office. It must include the title and student name.

PH.D. DISSERTATION

STUDENT NAME: _____
(Please print)

DATE OF FINAL APPROVAL: _____
(This must be the same as the final approval date on the dissertation signature page.) (Student is still responsible for submitting bound copies.)

Faculty Name (Please print)

Signature

Directed Study/Dissertation Title: _____
(Please print)

SAMPLE TITLE PAGE

**CHANGES IN COGNITION FROM ELABORATIVE STRATEGIES
IN PSYCHOTHERAPY**

by

Jane Psychologist

A Dissertation Presented to the School of Psychology
of Nova Southeastern University
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

NOVA SOUTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY

1998

(suppress page)

SAMPLE DISSERTATION APPROVAL SHEET

This dissertation was submitted by Jane Psychologist under the direction of the Chairperson of the dissertation committed listed below. It was submitted to the School of Psychology and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Clinical Psychology at Nova Southeastern University.

Approved:

Date of Defense

Karen Ellis, Ph.D., Chairperson

Sigmund Rogers. Psy.D

B.F. Lacan, Ph.D

Date of Final Approval

Karen Ellis. Ph.D.. Chairperson

(Roman numeral page #)

SAMPLE OF TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--|--|
| LIST OF TABLES | |
| LIST OF FIGURES | |
| ABSTRACT | |
| CHAPTER I: STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM | |
| Attitude Change | |
| Theory and Laboratory Research | |
| Clinically Relevant Research | |
| Simulation: Constructing Scenarios | |
| Theory and Laboratory Research | |
| Clinically Relevant Research | |
| Purpose of the Study | |
| Hypotheses | |
| CHAPTER II: METHOD | |
| Subjects | |
| Measures | |
| Treatments | |
| Procedure | |
| CHAPTER III: RESULTS | |
| Descriptive Statistics | |
| Treatment Effects | |
| CHAPTER IV: DISCUSSION | |
| The Hypotheses | |
| Limitations of the Study | |
| Findings Relative to Previous Research | |
| Implication for Practice and Future Research | |
| REFERENCES | |
| APPENDICES | |
| A. Client Consent Form | |
| B. Cognitive Elaboration Measures | |

(Roman numeral page #)

(suppress page # on this page)

SAMPLE ABSTRACT

**CHANGES IN COGNITION FROM ELABORATIVE STRATEGIES
IN PSYCHOTHERAPY**

by

Jane Psychologist

Nova Southeastern University

ABSTRACT
(Maximum 350 words)

(Arabic page #)

SAMPLE OF THE FORMAT

(Note 5 levels of headings)

CHAPTER I (Level 5)**Statement of the Problem (Level 1)**

Research in social psychology has validated the efficacy methods of changing cognitions and attitudes and provided support for theoretical models of the process. Clinicians have always promoted cognitive and attitudinal changes during psychotherapy and developed various techniques to do so. What is now needed is clinical research to validate the efficacy of well-specified interventions to change cognitions and attitudes.

Attitude Change (Level 2)

Research on attitude change has been accumulating for 50 years. The relevance of persuasion and attitude change to psychotherapy has been asserted and clinically relevant research conducted for 30 years.

Theory and Laboratory Research (Level 3)

***Early work.*(Level 4)** The first systematic program of research on attitude change was based on learning theory, while more recent work is based on cognitive theory.