

Doctor of Philosophy Degree in  
**School Psychology**  
Department of Educational Psychology

*Dissertation  
Handbook*

*See the 'PhD in School Psychology Program Handbook' for a description about how the specific content in the 'Dissertation Handbook' fits in with the overall orientation, content, requirements, expectations, policies, and procedures of the Doctor of Philosophy in School Psychology program.*

## Table of Contents

Dissertation Overview .....	4
Role of Faculty/Committees in the Dissertation Process .....	4
Doctoral Program Advisor .....	4
Graduate Program Committee .....	4
Dissertation Chair.....	5
Dissertation Committee .....	5
Changes to the Doctoral Dissertation Chair or Dissertation Committee .....	6
Support Staff .....	6
Types of Dissertations.....	7
Traditional/Standard Dissertation Format .....	7
Multiple-Essay Dissertation Format.....	8
General Dissertation Process/Timeline .....	8
Comprehensive Qualifying Examination and Admission to Candidacy .....	12
Dissertation ‘Pre-Proposal’ and the Comprehensive Qualifying Examination .....	12
Dissertation Proposal/Proposal Meeting.....	12
Dissertation Proposal Evaluation and Decision .....	14
Dissertation Data Collection .....	15
Overview of the Dissertation Preparation Process .....	15
Scheduling the Dissertation Defense Meeting/Final Oral Examination .....	17
Dissertation Defense Meeting/Final Oral Examination.....	18
Dissertation Defense/Final Oral Examination Results .....	19
Other Considerations for the Dissertation.....	20
Dissertation Course Registration.....	20
Continuous Dissertation Course Enrollment.....	21
Collaborative Institutional Training (CITI Program) .....	22
Institutional Review Board (IRB) and Compliance Approvals .....	22
Doctoral Internship and the Dissertation.....	22
Writing Style and Formatting .....	23
Final Dissertation Submission Deadlines .....	23
Publication of Dissertation .....	24
Graduation Dates and Commencement .....	24
Generative AI Policy .....	24
Resources for Students.....	25
Dissertation Writing Camp.....	25
Formatting Assistance.....	25

UTSA Writing Center.....	25
Academic Student Success Coaching.....	25
Reference Books.....	25
Appendix A. Dissertation Process Flowchart.....	26
Appendix B. Dissertation Proposal Rubric.....	27
Appendix C. Dissertation Rubric .....	34
Appendix D. Multiple-Essay Dissertation Format Guidelines .....	42

## Dissertation Overview

A dissertation is required of every doctoral candidate and must be an original contribution to scholarship, based on independent investigation. The dissertation is a culminating experience in a student's research training and is designed to demonstrate initiative, competency, and contribution to the scientific literature.

Although students take the primary responsibility for their dissertation and are responsible for completing all aspects of the dissertation, students work closely with their Dissertation Chair to develop their research idea, develop their research plan and timeline, and ensure adequate progress in completing the dissertation. Students that do not work closely with their Dissertation Chair may be delayed in completing the dissertation or may have significant difficulty meeting standards on the dissertation. Thus, students should pick a topic that is: (a) both meaningful to them and that aligns with the research interests and support which their Dissertation Chair is able to provide; (b) feasible within the time frame of the program; and (c) reflects the training, skills, and knowledge attained from the program.

Research and the preparation of the dissertation will follow a set sequence, to be reviewed in detail with the Dissertation Chair. Students should begin thinking about the dissertation – in terms of general ideas and interests – in their first and second year in the program so that they can select a Dissertation Chair and other faculty to be on their Dissertation Committee. Students should then work closely with their Dissertation Chair to develop their idea and begin to work on writing the proposal during the third year in the program, or sooner. *Students start taking dissertation credits after they have attained PhD candidacy, which typically happens during the third year in the program.*

As described below, there are particular requirements and procedures pertaining to all aspects of the dissertation process, including: (a) the dissertation committee membership and responsibilities, (b) benchmarks needed to formally begin dissertation work, (c) types of dissertations, (d) proposing the dissertation, (e) procedures for conducting research associated with the dissertation, (f) defending the dissertation, and (g) submitting the final dissertation to the Graduate School in fulfillment of degree requirements.

## Role of Faculty/Committees in the Dissertation Process

### Doctoral Program Advisor

On admission to the PhD in School Psychology program, students are assigned a Doctoral Program Advisor, who is a core faculty member of the PhD in School Psychology program and a member of the UTSA Graduate Faculty. Doctoral Program Advisors assist students with the early stages of the dissertation process, including discussing the steps in the dissertation, assisting with early ideas for the dissertation, and assisting with identifying a Dissertation Chair.

*Note: Assigned Doctoral Program Advisors may serve as the Dissertation Chair if a different Dissertation Chair is not requested.*

### Graduate Program Committee

The Graduate Program Committee specifies the procedures students must follow in developing a dissertation proposal. Additionally, before admission to candidacy, each student's proposed

program of study is under the direction of the Graduate Program Committee, the student's assigned advisor, and the program Graduate Advisor of Record/Director of Clinical Training. *Upon admission to candidacy and the formation of the student's Dissertation Committee, the program of study comes under the purview of the Dissertation Committee, which reviews the proposed program of study and recommends to the Graduate Program Committee any additional course requirements.*

*Note: The Graduate Program Committee is comprised of all core school psychology faculty members in the PhD in School Psychology program.*

### **Dissertation Chair**

In consultation with Graduate Advisor of Record/Director of Clinical Training and the student's Doctoral Program Advisor, the student selects a Dissertation Chair with that faculty member's consent. The Dissertation Chair serves as the primary advisor for the student's work on the dissertation. The Dissertation Chair must be selected before a student is admitted to doctoral candidacy. *The Dissertation Chair may be the student's Doctoral Program Advisor.*

In most cases, the Dissertation Chair will be a core school psychology member – who holds the status of UTSA Graduate Faculty – in the PhD in School Psychology program in the Department of Educational Psychology. However, for interdisciplinary committees, the Dissertation Chair may be a Graduate Faculty member from another department upon approval of the Associate Dean of the College of Education and Human Development (COEHD) and Dean of the Graduate School.

Additionally, occasionally a research professor or researcher who is not a member of the Graduate Faculty may be recommended by the Graduate Program Committee to serve as a primary supervisor for a specific dissertation because their expertise would be valuable to the student. When the research supervisor is not a member of the Graduate Faculty in the student's program of study, the identified research supervisors and a member of the PhD in School Psychology Graduate Program Committee will be appointed as Co-Chairs of the Dissertation Committee.

### **Dissertation Committee**

Upon completion of all components of the comprehensive qualifying examination and admission to candidacy (for more information, see the 'Student Progress/Evaluation, Qualifying Examination, & Admission to Candidacy Handbook'), and upon recommendation of the Graduate Program Committee and the College of Educational and Human Development (COEHD), the Graduate School formally appoints the Dissertation Committee. Members of the Dissertation Committee should be selected based on their availability to participate in the dissertation process and their alignment with the dissertation topic. The Dissertation Committee advises the student on the research and writing of the dissertation, conducts the dissertation proposal, conducts the dissertation defense/final oral examination, and approves the final dissertation. The Dissertation Chair is a member of the Dissertation Committee and serves as the primary supervisor of the dissertation, but other members of the Dissertation Committee are consulted as appropriate.

The Dissertation Committee must consist of at least four members, including the Dissertation Chair. Members of the Dissertation Committee must be members of the UTSA Graduate Faculty or be approved for Special Member status by the UTSA Graduate Council and Graduate

School. An individual outside UTSA may serve on the Dissertation Committee, but only after receiving Special Faculty status (see the UTSA Graduate Catalog for additional information from the Graduate School [<https://graduateschool.utsa.edu/faculty-staff/council/special-adjoint.html>]). Approval of a Special Faculty appointment requires initial approval by the Dissertation Chair, as well as approval from the Department Chair and the PhD in School Psychology Graduate Program Committee. Only one Special Faculty member may participate as a Dissertation Committee member.

*A majority of the dissertation committee must consist of Graduate Faculty or Adjoint Faculty in the student's program (i.e., at least 3 dissertation committee members must be core PhD in School Psychology faculty in the Department of Educational Psychology).* The following are links related to establishing the Dissertation Committee:

1. Appointment of Doctoral Dissertation Committee Form
  - a. <https://graduateschool.utsa.edu/documents/faculty-staff/forms/doctoral-committee-forms/appointment-of-doctoral-dissertation-committee.pdf>
2. Application for Graduate Faculty Special Membership Form
  - a. [https://graduateschool.utsa.edu/documents/faculty-staff/application\\_for\\_special\\_member-form-9.26.23-1.pdf](https://graduateschool.utsa.edu/documents/faculty-staff/application_for_special_member-form-9.26.23-1.pdf)

As previously noted, upon the formation of the student's dissertation committee, the program of study comes under the purview of the Dissertation Committee, which reviews the proposed program of study and recommends to the Graduate Program Committee any additional course requirements. The final program of study, as approved by the Graduate Program Committee, is then recommended to the College of Education and Human Development (COEHD) and to the Graduate School for approval. The Dissertation Committee also certifies to the College and the Graduate School that all degree requirements have been fulfilled.

### **Changes to the Doctoral Dissertation Chair or Dissertation Committee**

Doctoral students in good standing who choose to change their Dissertation Chair must: (a) inform their current Dissertation Chair of their intent to change, (b) write a letter documenting the reason(s) for the desired change, and (c) submit the letter to the Dissertation Chair, the Dissertation Committee, and Department Chair. Students must discuss their intent to change their Dissertation Chair with their current Dissertation Chair before submitting the formal request. If there is a need to change members of the Dissertation Committee, students must consult their Dissertation Chair and all Dissertation Committee members before making a formal change.

*Note: Changes to the Dissertation Committee – once the committee has already been formally established – require documentation to be signed by the Department Chair, the Associate Dean of the College of Education and Human Development (COEHD), and the Dean of the Graduate School.*

### **Support Staff**

The Student Development Specialist (SDS) in the Department of Educational Psychology is available for consultation about the requirements for the dissertation and graduation. The SDS will also assist students in disseminating dissertation announcements. The SDS will also audit academic files to make sure students have completed all required forms for the dissertation and graduation. The SDS for the Department of Educational Psychology is Trinity Brown ([trinity.brown2@utsa.edu](mailto:trinity.brown2@utsa.edu)).

The Senior Administrative Associate in the Department of Educational Psychology is available to assist with scheduling rooms for dissertation activities (e.g., scheduling the dissertation proposal meeting, scheduling the dissertation defense meeting). The Senior Administrative Associate for the Department of Educational Psychology is Teresa Pena ([teresa.pena@utsa.edu](mailto:teresa.pena@utsa.edu)).

## Types of Dissertations

PhD in School Psychology students may select one of two general dissertation formats: (i) traditional/standard format, or (ii) multiple-essay format. Students and Dissertation Chairs are required to communicate with the Dissertation Committee about which format will be used and clarify expectations regarding the chosen format. *If students choose the multiple-essay format, the dissertation must nonetheless be comparable to the traditional/standard format with respect to the literature review and proposed methods (i.e., students are not permitted to prepare the dissertation document in a 'brief report' format, regardless of the type of dissertation format selected).*

Students cannot change the type of dissertation format used after the dissertation proposal has been approved by the Dissertation Committee. **If a student wants to change the type of dissertation format after the dissertation proposal is approved, students are required to complete a new dissertation proposal that reflects the new type of dissertation format selected.**

### Traditional/Standard Dissertation Format

The traditional/standard dissertation format is comprised of a single manuscript (presented in chapters), appendix, and references section. The traditional/standard format includes the following major sections:

- i. Acknowledgements
- ii. Abstract
- iii. List of Tables
- iv. List of Figures
- v. Chapter One: Introduction/Problem Statement
- vi. Chapter Two: Review of the Literature (and Conceptual Framework)
- vii. Chapter Three: Methods
- viii. Chapter Four: Results or Findings
- ix. Chapter Five: Discussion
- x. Conclusion
- xi. Appendices
- xii. References
- xiii. Vita

Students can download a template for the traditional/standard dissertation format at: <https://graduateschool.utsa.edu/gps/formatting-requirements.html>

## Multiple-Essay Dissertation Format

The multiple-essay (paper, chapter, etc.) dissertation format is designed for dissertations comprised of two or more distinct essays, which will each be broken into chapters and presented with their own appendices and references. The multiple-essay format includes the following major sections:

- i. Acknowledgements
- ii. Abstract (overall dissertation)
- iii. List of Tables
- iv. List of Figures
- v. Essay I. Title
  - a. Chapter 1: Introduction/Problem Statement
  - b. Chapter 2: Review of the Literature/Conceptual Framework
  - c. Chapter 3: Methods
  - d. Chapter 4: Results or Findings
  - e. Chapter 5: Discussion
  - f. Conclusion
  - g. Appendices
  - h. References
- vi. Essay II. Title
  - a. Chapter 1: Introduction/Problem Statement
  - b. Chapter 2: Review of the Literature/Conceptual Framework
  - c. Chapter 3: Methods
  - d. Chapter 4: Results or Findings
  - e. Chapter 5: Discussion
  - f. Conclusion
  - g. Appendices
  - h. References
- vii. Essay III. Title (if needed)
  - a. Chapter 1: Introduction/Problem Statement
  - b. Chapter 2: Review of the Literature/Conceptual Framework
  - c. Chapter 3: Methods
  - d. Chapter 4: Results or Findings
  - e. Chapter 5: Discussion
  - f. Conclusion
  - g. Appendices
  - h. References
- viii. Vita

You can download a template for the multiple-essay dissertation format at:

<https://graduateschool.utsa.edu/gps/formatting-requirements.html>

***See Appendix D for more information about the multiple-essay dissertation format and requirements.***

## General Dissertation Process/Timeline

The dissertation process consists of several stages, all of which must be completed in a specific order. The outline below provides a general overview of these stages. **(For a summary of this**



process, see the Dissertation Process Flowchart [Appendix A]). Details specific to each stage are provided in relevant sections of this handbook (following this section).

***(Note: The timelines listed below and throughout this handbook are for students following a 'standard' program of study [i.e., students that have not transferred a significant number of credit hours]. Students that have transferred a significant number of previously earned graduate credit hours to the program are expected to complete all steps one year sooner than they are listed below.)***

1. Students select a Dissertation Chair.
  - *Completed by the first semester of their third year in the program.*
  - The selected faculty member must consent to serve as the student's Dissertation Chair. The Dissertation Chair may be the student's doctoral advisor.
2. Students establish their Dissertation Committee.
  - *Completed by the second semester of their third year in the program.*
  - With the assistance of the Dissertation Chair, students identify the other members of the Dissertation Committee.
  - Students must complete the Appointment of Doctoral Dissertation Committee Form (<https://graduateschool.utsa.edu/documents/faculty-staff/forms/doctoral-committee-forms/appointment-of-doctoral-dissertation-committee.pdf>)
3. Students complete all requirements to be admitted to doctoral candidacy, including:
  - Interim Program of Study Form for the PhD in School Psychology program
    - i. *Must be updated by the end of the spring semester of the third year in the program.*
    - ii. The Interim Program of Study Form should be obtained from the Graduate Advisor of Record/Director of Clinical Training and be updated by the student and their assigned advisor. The Interim Program of Study Form will indicate whether students have completed all required coursework to proceed with the dissertation.
  - Milestones Agreement Form.
    - i. *Must be updated each year – by the end of the spring semester – that the student is in the program.*
    - ii. Students are required to have an up-to-date Milestones Agreement Form at the end of the spring semester of each academic year.
  - Comprehensive Qualifying Examination
    - i. *All components must be completed by the end of the spring semester of the third year in the program.*
    - ii. The qualifying examination includes the following components:
      1. School Psychology Comprehensive Practice Model Examination
      2. Written Examination
      3. Oral Examination
    - iii. Students must complete the Completion of Qualifying Examination Form. ([https://graduateschool.utsa.edu/faculty-staff/forms/completion\\_of\\_the\\_qualifying\\_exam.pdf](https://graduateschool.utsa.edu/faculty-staff/forms/completion_of_the_qualifying_exam.pdf))
4. Apply for candidacy for the PhD in School Psychology.
  - *Must be completed by the end of the summer semester in the third year in the program.*
  - Students must complete the Application for Candidacy Form ([https://graduateschool.utsa.edu/documents/faculty-staff/forms/doctoral-committee-forms/application\\_for\\_candidacy\\_for\\_the\\_doctoral\\_degree.pdf](https://graduateschool.utsa.edu/documents/faculty-staff/forms/doctoral-committee-forms/application_for_candidacy_for_the_doctoral_degree.pdf))

5. Register for and maintain continuous enrollment in the Doctoral Dissertation classes (EDP 7993, EDP 7991 [if needed]).
  - *Must begin doctoral dissertation in the fall semester of the fourth year in the program via registration in EDP 7993 (3.0 credit hours).*
  - *Must maintain enrollment in EDP 7993 (3.0 credit hours) in the spring and summer semesters of the fourth year in the program.*
  - Enrollment in Doctoral Dissertation (EDP 7993 or EDP 7991) permits the Dissertation Chair and members of the Dissertation Committee to assist the student with their dissertation, and it permits the student to use UTSA resources to work on the dissertation.
  - If the dissertation is not completed by the end of the summer semester of the fourth year, students must enroll in 1.0 credits of Doctoral Dissertation (via EDP 7991) in the fall semester of the fifth year in the program and every subsequent semester until the dissertation is complete, as indicated by the Graduate School.
6. Prepare the Dissertation Proposal (Written Component).
  - *Must be completed by October 1<sup>st</sup> of the fall semester of the fourth year in the program.*
  - Student should be visiting regularly with their Dissertation Chair at this stage to fully develop the Dissertation Proposal.
  - The Dissertation Proposal includes the first three chapters of the Dissertation, including:
    - i. Chapter 1: Introduction/Problem Statement
    - ii. Chapter 2: Literature Review/Conceptual Framework
    - iii. Chapter 3: Methods
7. Schedule the Dissertation Proposal Meeting/Defense.
  - *Must be scheduled by October 15<sup>th</sup> of the fall semester of the fourth year in the program.*
  - The Dissertation Chair will review the written Dissertation Proposal and must determine that the proposal is of high quality before students are permitted to submit their dissertation proposal to all Dissertation Committee members and to schedule the Dissertation Proposal Meeting/Defense.
8. Present and pass the Dissertation Proposal Meeting/Defense.
  - *Must be scheduled and passed by October 15<sup>th</sup> of the fall semester of the fourth year in the program.*
  - If students 'pass' the Dissertation Proposal, they must complete the Dissertation Proposal Approval Form (<https://graduateschool.utsa.edu/documents/faculty-staff/forms/doctoral-committee-forms/dissertation-proposal-approval-form.pdf>)
9. Obtain IRB approval via the ORIC (if relevant and if not already obtained).
  - *Must be completed as soon as possible after the Dissertation Proposal is approved.*
  - *Must be completed no later than December 1<sup>st</sup> of the fall semester of the student's fourth year in the program.*
  - Students must visit the IRB website for related guidance and submission requirements (<https://research.utsa.edu/compliance/irb.html>)
10. Collect Dissertation data.
  - *Must be started as soon as students attain IRB approval (if relevant).*
  - Students are strongly encouraged to collect all dissertation-related data by the end of the spring semester of the fourth year in the program.
11. Prepare the Dissertation document.

- Students have already prepared Chapters 1, 2, and 3 of the dissertation as part of the Dissertation Proposal. Students should continue editing these chapters based on feedback received from the Dissertation Committee.
  - *Students should complete Chapter 4 (Analysis/Results/Findings) and Chapter 5 (Discussion/Implications) as soon as they have completed data collection and related analyses.*
  - Students must use the formatting resources and guidelines provided by the Graduate School (<https://graduateschool.utsa.edu/gps/formatting-requirements.html>) in preparing the dissertation document.
  - *Students are strongly encouraged to complete the Dissertation document (all chapters) by the end of the spring semester of the fourth year in the program.*
12. Schedule the Dissertation Defense/Final Oral Examination.
- *Must be scheduled for some time before the end of the summer semester of the fourth year in the program.*
  - *If students are unable to schedule the Dissertation Defense before the end of the summer semester of the fourth year, students are required to continue to enroll in Doctoral Dissertation credits (via EDP 7991) until they complete the dissertation.*
  - The Dissertation Chair will review the written dissertation document and must determine that the dissertation is of high quality before students are permitted to schedule the Dissertation Defense/Final Oral Examination.
13. Successfully defend the Dissertation.
- Must be completed by the end of the summer semester of the fourth year in the program.
  - *If students are unable to 'pass' the Dissertation Defense/Final Oral Examination before the end of the summer semester of the fourth year, students are required to continue to enroll in Doctoral Dissertation credits (via EDP 7991) until they complete the dissertation.*
  - If students 'pass' the Dissertation Defense/Final Oral Examination, they must complete the Certification of Completion of Dissertation Requirements for Doctoral Degree Form (<https://graduateschool.utsa.edu/documents/faculty-staff/forms/doctoral-committee-forms/certification-of-completion-of-dissertation-requirements-for-doctoral-degree.pdf>)
14. Submit final copies of the Dissertation to the Graduate School.
- After 'passing' the dissertation (as indicated by the 'Certification of Completion of Dissertation Requirements'), students must submit the final copy of the dissertation to the Graduate School.
  - To ensure timely processing for the final dissertation, students are strongly encouraged to consider the following requirements:
    - i. Ensure alignment with the dissertation formatting checklist (<https://graduateschool.utsa.edu/documents/student/preparation-guidelines/formatting-checklist1.pdf>)
    - ii. Ensure alignment with the Final Submission Requirements (<https://graduateschool.utsa.edu/gps/final-submission-requirements.html>)
    - iii. Ensure alignment with the Final Submission Deadlines (<https://graduateschool.utsa.edu/gps/thesis-dissertation-deadlines.html>)
15. File the Final Program of Study Form.
- Prior to graduation, students must submit a final Program of Study indicating that student has completed all program coursework and requirements.
  - Students should obtain the final Program of Study Form from the Graduate Advisor of Record/Director of Clinical Training and update it with the support of the Graduate Advisor of Record/Director of Clinical Training, the student's

Dissertation Chair, and the Student Development Specialist (SDS) from the Department of Educational Psychology.

## **Comprehensive Qualifying Examination and Admission to Candidacy**

As previously noted, students cannot begin formal dissertation work until they have passed all components of the Comprehensive Qualifying Examination, have submitted a proposed/interim Program of Study, have met all related university-wide requirements, and are formally admitted to candidacy.

Students should consult their Doctoral Program Advisor and the Student Development Specialist, who will verify whether they have completed the academic requirements to move on to the Qualifying Examination and inform students of any additional information needed at this stage. After passing the Qualifying Examination, students will work with their Doctoral Program Advisor and the Student Development Specialist to create and submit the formal application to the Graduate School for admission to candidacy via the following forms:

1. Completion of Qualifying Examination Form
  - [https://graduateschool.utsa.edu/faculty-staff/forms/completion\\_of\\_the\\_qualifying\\_exam.pdf](https://graduateschool.utsa.edu/faculty-staff/forms/completion_of_the_qualifying_exam.pdf)
2. Admission to Candidacy Form
  - [https://graduateschool.utsa.edu/documents/faculty-staff/forms/doctoral-committee-forms/application\\_for\\_candidacy\\_for\\_the\\_doctoral\\_degree.pdf](https://graduateschool.utsa.edu/documents/faculty-staff/forms/doctoral-committee-forms/application_for_candidacy_for_the_doctoral_degree.pdf)

## **Dissertation 'Pre-Proposal' and the Comprehensive Qualifying Examination**

As part of the Comprehensive Qualifying Examination process (typically completed in the third year of the program), students may begin preliminary work towards their dissertation via the written and oral examination components which may serve as an informal dissertation 'pre-proposal.' *For students entering with advanced status (i.e., prior, equivalent graduate coursework for which they received transfer of credits), the Comprehensive Qualifying Examination process and informal pre-proposal may begin in the spring of their second year in the program if they wish to complete the program in four years.*

The qualifying examination 'pre-proposal' is comprised of both written and oral components, both of which should include a general review/discussion of the identification of problems/topics of interest, relevant literature, identification of possible research questions, and initial thoughts on research design to address the problem identified. This is intended to facilitate the development of the formal dissertation proposal with some early feedback from program faculty.

In preparation for the qualifying examination (and informal dissertation 'pre-proposal'), students will be working primarily with their assigned Doctoral Program Advisor to discuss topic(s) of interest, timelines, and strategies to complete related work. However, students may also identify a Dissertation Chair at this stage to assist them with the informal dissertation 'pre-proposal.'

## **Dissertation Proposal/Proposal Meeting**

The dissertation proposal process is an examination of the proposed dissertation study by the Dissertation Committee as a whole. It requires the student to complete considerable work in

preparing the ‘foundation’ for the complete dissertation. It is also a collaborative work process in which potential problems in the proposal can be identified and addressed. The dissertation proposal process consists of two major components. The first is the written proposal and the second is the proposal meeting/defense.

Students complete the written dissertation proposal under the supervision of their Dissertation Chair. Generally, the dissertation proposal consists of the first three chapters of the dissertation, including the: (i) Introduction/Problem Statement, (ii) Literature Review, and (iii) Method.

- i. Introduction/Problem Statement – The first chapter should identify the ‘problem’ of interest and explain why the dissertation study is necessary. This chapter should be about 10 pages.
- ii. Literature Review – The second chapter should present a review of relevant literature, including the conceptual framework connected to the problem presented in the first chapter. This chapter should also provide a methodological review of related literature and make a connection to the methods chosen for the dissertation (detailed in the next chapter). This literature review chapter should be about 20-40 pages.
- iii. Method – The third chapter should describe the type of research methods associated with the dissertation study, including procedures related to data collection, the use of measures/instruments, and the analysis plan. This chapter should be about 10-20 pages.

In preparing the dissertation proposal, students are expected to follow these general steps:

1. Students start writing the first three chapters of the dissertation following all Graduate School guidelines. Students should seek initial and ongoing consultation from the UTSA Writing Center, their Dissertation Chair, colleagues, and peers.
2. Students submit a well-written and methodologically sound dissertation proposal to their Dissertation Chair. The proposal must include:
  - a. The first three chapters of the dissertation, with chapter 3 (Methods) written in the future tense. All references must be included.
  - b. All appendices (e.g., permission forms, IRB forms, instruments, letters of support, manuals, etc.) that will be used in the dissertation must be included.
3. The student’s Dissertation Chair will provide feedback on the proposal. Students must meet with their Dissertation Chair to discuss major and minor revisions.
  - a. If revisions are required, student must resubmit their dissertation proposal and a written summary of changes to their Dissertation Chair. The Dissertation Chair will provide feedback on revisions within 10 business days.
  - b. At this stage, multiple revisions and resubmissions may be necessary until the proposal is deemed ready by the Dissertation Chair for formal Dissertation Committee review.
4. With the Dissertation Chair’s approval, students will submit their dissertation proposal to all members of the Dissertation Committee. The Dissertation Committee will provide feedback on the proposal.
  - a. Students meet with their Dissertation Chair and Dissertation Committee members, as needed, to discuss recommended revisions to the proposal.
  - b. As needed, students revise and resubmit their proposal (including a written summary of changes), allowing 10 business days for Dissertation Committee review and feedback for each revision. There may be multiple cycles of revisions and resubmissions.

When the Dissertation Committee approves the written proposal, the student schedules the dissertation proposal meeting/defense. In scheduling the proposal meeting, students are expected to follow these general steps:

5. Dissertation Proposal meetings/defenses are typically scheduled during the fall and spring semesters, as faculty may not be available during the summer months.
6. Students must complete relevant IRB and training requirements before the Dissertation Proposal meeting/defense date. Students must provide proof of completion and current IRB compliance to the Dissertation Committee.
7. In consultation with all members of the Dissertation Committee, students will schedule the Dissertation Proposal meeting/defense on a mutually acceptable date. Students should schedule 1.5 hours for their presentation, Q&A time, deliberation, and final decision. The following are guidelines to use when scheduling the Dissertation Proposal meeting/defense:
  - a. Dissertation Proposal meetings/defenses must be presented 'in-person' on campus. If needed, the Senior Administrative Associate can assist with scheduling a room.
  - b. All members of the Dissertation Committee must attend the Dissertation Proposal meeting/defense.
  - c. The approved written dissertation proposal should be distributed to all Dissertation Committee members at least two business days before the Dissertation Proposal meeting/defense.

The Dissertation Proposal meeting/defense is a formal meeting where students present their proposed dissertation study to the Dissertation Committee. The student's Dissertation Chair facilitates the Dissertation Proposal meeting/defense. Following is the Dissertation Proposal meeting/defense structure:

8. The Dissertation Chair introduces the student and the Dissertation Committee.
9. The student presents the proposed dissertation study. This part of the presentation should not exceed 30 minutes.
10. The Dissertation Committee asks questions of the student, and the Dissertation Committee provides comments on the proposal.
11. The student is excused from the meeting room.
12. The Dissertation Committee deliberates and evaluates whether the student passes or fails the proposal (as described in further detail in the next section).
13. The Dissertation Chair invites the student back into the meeting room and notifies the student of the Dissertation Committee's decision. If needed, the student and the Dissertation Committee discuss any needed revisions for the proposal.

## Dissertation Proposal Evaluation and Decision

The student's Dissertation Proposal will be evaluated based on the Dissertation Proposal Rubric (Appendix B). The proposal rubric includes detailed domains/areas which the Dissertation Committee will be evaluating, as well as expectations for each area. ***Students are strongly encouraged to regularly review the proposal rubric as they are preparing their Dissertation Proposal. Students that do not regularly review the proposal are unlikely to 'pass' the proposal.***

After the Dissertation Proposal is complete (both the written proposal and the proposal presentation/defense), the student's Dissertation Committee members deliberate to determine the outcome, which will be: (a) 'Pass', (b) 'Not Yet Satisfactory', or (c) 'Fail.' The decision of the Dissertation Committee must be unanimous, so the deliberation process is important.

If the Dissertation Committee decides that the dissertation proposal is 'Not Yet Satisfactory,' students will need to make major revisions to the proposal (based on Dissertation Committee feedback) and provide a written summary of those revisions to the Dissertation Committee. The Committee is then allowed 10 business days to respond to those revisions. If Dissertation Committee members view the revisions necessary to the proposal to be substantial, the members may request a second Dissertation Proposal meeting. The Dissertation Committee will then deliberate again to determine the outcome of the Dissertation Proposal based on the revised submission.

If the Dissertation Committee decides that the outcome of the dissertation proposal is 'Fail,' students must work with their Dissertation Chair to determine whether to continue with the same project or to begin a new project for the dissertation.

Once the Dissertation Committee decides that the outcome of the dissertation proposal is 'Pass,' students are eligible to begin the data collection phase of their dissertation pending IRB approval, if relevant. The Dissertation Proposal Form (<https://graduateschool.utsa.edu/documents/faculty-staff/forms/doctoral-committee-forms/dissertation-proposal-approval-form.pdf>) must be completed after the Dissertation Committee formally approves the Dissertation Proposal, which occurs after the proposal meeting/defense.

*Note: The formal Dissertation Proposal (including the proposal meeting/defense) must be completed prior to October 15<sup>th</sup> of the fourth year of the program or the year in which the student is applying for internship, with the written proposal components provided to all committee members no less than two (2) weeks prior to the scheduled proposal meeting.*

## Dissertation Data Collection

Once students have passed the Dissertation Proposal and have received written approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB, if needed), the Graduate School, and the Dissertation Committee, students may begin the data collection phase of the dissertation.

Students must adhere exactly to the recruitment, data collection, and data analysis plans as outlined in the Dissertation Proposal and IRB documentation (if relevant). Any variation from previously approved data recruitment, collection, and analysis plans will require written approval from the Dissertation Committee and the IRB. ***Significant changes to a study after the Dissertation Committee has approved the dissertation proposal will require a second Dissertation Proposal meeting/defense based on variations/changes to the original proposal.***

## Overview of the Dissertation Preparation Process

Once students have collected and analyzed their dissertation data, students will write the final two chapters of their dissertation and edit the entire document. The final two chapters of the



dissertation include: (iv) Analysis/Results/Findings, and (v) Discussion/Conclusions/Implications.

- iv. Analysis/Results/Findings – The fourth chapter should describe the data analysis process (including limitations regarding the analysis), as well as the presentation and interpretation of results/findings. This chapter should be about 20-30 pages.
- v. Discussion/Conclusions/Implications – The fifth chapter should present a synthesis of findings situated within the larger context of the problem. This chapter should also present recommendations/implications based on the study results/findings. This chapter should be about 20-40 pages.

The following steps outline the minimum expectations related to the dissertation preparation process:

1. As previously described in the 'General Dissertation Process/Timeline,' students must register for dissertation credit under their Dissertation Chair's section until students have successfully defended their dissertation and until the final dissertation is approved by the Graduate School. *This permits the Dissertation Chair and members of the Dissertation Committee to assist the student with their dissertation.*
2. Students should meet regularly with their Dissertation Chair and Dissertation Committee members to:
  - a. Discuss their progress in the dissertation,
  - b. Seek methodological consultation, and
  - c. Address any issues that may arise during this stage of the dissertation.
3. Students write the final two chapters of the dissertation following all Graduate School guidelines. Students must also edit the entire document (including the previously completed chapters) for grammar, clarity, and overall readability.
  - a. Throughout this process, students should regularly consult with the UTSA Writing Center, the Graduate School, their Dissertation Chair, colleagues, and peers, as needed, about the quality and clarity of their dissertation.
4. Student should submit a well-written and methodologically sound dissertation to their Dissertation Chair. At a minimum, the dissertation will include:
  - a. All chapters of the dissertation written in the appropriate tense. The document must conform to all Graduate School and APA-style guidelines and standards.
  - b. All appendices (e.g., permission forms, IRB forms, instruments, letters of support, manuals) used in the study.
5. **Students must register for a formatting workshop/webinar and schedule a preliminary draft review appointment with the Graduate School. Students must submit evidence of completion of this step to their Dissertation Chair.**
  - a. Taking these steps may reduce the number of revisions requested by the Graduate School in the final draft and help ensure a timely submission. If the final dissertation draft does not meet the Graduate School's formatting guidelines, students' graduation could be delayed until the draft is deemed acceptable.
6. As requested, the student's Dissertation Chair will provide students with feedback on their dissertation within 10 business days. Students should meet with their Dissertation Chair to discuss major and minor revisions.
  - a. Students must provide a written summary of the changes and revisions made to the dissertation and resubmit the dissertation document (along with the summary of changes) to their Dissertation Chair.
  - b. The Dissertation Chair will provide feedback on revised dissertations.



- c. If ongoing revisions are needed, students will need to resubmit their dissertation and allow the Dissertation Chair to respond to additional revisions until the dissertation is deemed ready for formal Dissertation Committee review.
7. With the Dissertation Chair's approval, students will formally submit their dissertation to all members of their Dissertation Committee.
  - a. The Dissertation Committee will provide students with additional feedback on the dissertation. If requested, students will meet with their Dissertation Chair to discuss revisions to the dissertation based on the Dissertation Committee feedback.
  - b. Students will continue to revise and resubmit their dissertation (as needed), allowing 10 business days for Dissertation Committee review and feedback for each revision. For each revision, students must provide a written summary to the Dissertation Committee of the changes and revisions to the dissertation.
8. Once the Dissertation Committee fully approves the student's dissertation and students have satisfactorily made all revisions, students may schedule the Dissertation Defense Meeting/Final Oral Examination.

## **Scheduling the Dissertation Defense Meeting/Final Oral Examination**

Dissertation Defenses are typically scheduled during the fall and spring semesters. Depending on faculty availability, defenses may be scheduled during the summer semester. Students should consult with all members of their Dissertation Committee to determine the date for the Dissertation Defense Meeting/Final Oral Examination.

Please note that a Dissertation Defense cannot be scheduled until the Dissertation Committee approves the student's work. *No defense meetings will be scheduled until the committee agrees that the proposal and dissertation are exceptionally written. Students' Dissertation Committees may request that students seek additional writing guidance. To support students in this process, UTSA offers many workshops throughout the year.*

Students should schedule the Dissertation Defense Meeting for 2 hours, to include the research presentation, Q&A time, committee deliberation, and final decision. The following are guidelines for scheduling the Dissertation Defense Meeting:

1. Students are responsible for knowing about and adhering to Graduate School timelines related to dissertations. The Graduate School provides specific information about dissertation submission dates for each academic term.
  - See: <https://graduateschool.utsa.edu/gps/thesis-dissertation-deadlines.html>
2. In consultation with their Dissertation Chair, students communicate the date and time of the Dissertation Defense Meeting to the Department of Educational Psychology office. Dissertation Defense Meetings must be presented 'in-person' on campus. The Senior Administrative Associate for the Department can assist students with scheduling a room for the meeting.
3. In consultation with the Student Development Specialist (SDS), a formal announcement of the Dissertation Defense Meeting should be typed in memo form, including: (a) the title of the dissertation study, (b) the student's name, (c) the time and place of the Dissertation Defense Meeting, and (d) the names of the Dissertation Committee members.

- At least 5 business days before the Dissertation Defense Meeting, the Student Development Specialist (SDS) will share this announcement, inviting faculty and other doctoral students to the meeting.
  - *Note: Dissertation Defense Meetings are open to the public and may be attended by other students, university faculty, and individuals who are interested in the topic, as well as colleagues, friends, and family.*
4. All members of the Dissertation Committee must attend the Dissertation Defense Meeting.
  5. The Dean of the Graduate School, Dissertation Committee, Dissertation Chair, and the Chair of the Department of Educational Psychology must be notified within 5 business days before a Dissertation Defense Meeting date or time change.
    - If an unexpected change occurs in the date or time of the defense, the Dean of the Graduate School, Dissertation Committee, Dissertation Chair, and the Chair of the Department of Educational Psychology must be notified within 1 business day of the change.
    - *Failure to notify the Dean of the Graduate School of any change in the Dissertation Defense Meeting schedule will automatically result in nullification of the Dissertation Defense as scheduled.*
  6. Hardcopies of the student's approved 'final' dissertation (or e-copies if requested) must be distributed to all members of the Dissertation Committee members at least 2 days prior to the Dissertation Defense Meeting.
  7. Students and members of the Dissertation Committee participate in the Dissertation Defense Meeting as outlined below.

## **Dissertation Defense Meeting/Final Oral Examination**

The Dissertation Defense Meeting/Final Oral Examination is a formal meeting and oral examination where students present their full study to the Dissertation Committee, academic community, and public. A satisfactory dissertation defense/final oral examination is required for the approval of the dissertation. Students should work closely with their Dissertation Chair to determine when students are ready to schedule the Dissertation Defense/Final Oral Examination. *Satisfactorily completing revisions suggested by members of the Dissertation Committee reduces the probability of serious and substantive issues being raised by the Dissertation Committee during the Dissertation Defense/Final Oral Examination meeting.*

After the Dissertation Committee makes a unanimous decision to accept a dissertation for the Dissertation Defense/Final Oral Examination, the student's Dissertation Chair notifies the Graduate School at least two weeks in advance of the date of the Dissertation Defense/Final Oral Examination.

The process of the Dissertation Defense Meeting/Final Oral Examination is similar to that of the Dissertation Proposal defense meeting. The student's Dissertation Chair facilitates the Dissertation Defense Meeting. Following is the general Dissertation Defense Meeting structure:

1. The Dissertation Chair introduces the student and Dissertation Committee.
2. The student presents the full dissertation study. The presentation should be limited to 45 minutes.
3. The Dissertation Committee members ask questions of the student.

- Student responses to the Dissertation Committee must demonstrate command of the literature, research methodology, data analyses, and implications of the study for the psychology profession.
- 4. Guests who are not part of the Dissertation Committee are excused and the Dissertation Committee has an opportunity to ask additional questions, provide feedback, and recommend any revisions needed for the dissertation.
- 5. After answering all questions from the Dissertation Committee, the student is excused from the meeting room.
- 6. The Dissertation Committee deliberates and evaluates whether the student passes or fails the defense (as described in the next section)
- 7. The Dissertation Chair invites the student back into the meeting room and notifies the student of the Dissertation Committee's decision.
- 8. If the student passes the Dissertation Defense with few or no revisions recommended, the Dissertation Committee may sign the dissertation title pages and other required paperwork at their discretion.
  - However, the student may be asked to make minor revisions and earn additional Dissertation Committee approval before formal paperwork is signed.
  - If the Dissertation Committee determines that more significant revisions are needed, then the Dissertation Committee and the student negotiate the details, nature, and timeline for necessary changes.
  - If the Dissertation Committee determines that the student has failed the Dissertation Defense, then the student must start the dissertation anew.
  - *These possible outcomes are described more fully in the next section.*

## Dissertation Defense/Final Oral Examination Results

The student's performance on the final Dissertation will be evaluated based on the Dissertation Rubric (see Appendix C). The dissertation rubric includes detailed domains/areas which the Dissertation Committee will be evaluating, as well as expectations for each area. ***Students are strongly encouraged to regularly review the dissertation rubric as they are preparing their final dissertation. Students that do not regularly review the dissertation rubric are at a high risk of failing the dissertation defense.***

Following the student's Dissertation Defense/Final Oral Examination, the Dissertation Committee will render a decision on whether the student passed the Dissertation Defense. The Dissertation Committee will also provide students with feedback about their dissertation outcome. There are three outcomes to the Dissertation Defense: (a) 'Pass', (b) 'Not Yet Satisfactory', or (c) 'Fail.'

- i. Students may 'Pass' the Dissertation Defense and be required to complete few to no revisions.
  - Approval of all Dissertation Committee members must be unanimous in order to 'Pass.'
- ii. Students may receive a 'Not Yet Satisfactory' decision, which means that they need to complete revisions/rewriting before the Dissertation Committee formally approves (i.e., 'Passes') the dissertation.
  - The Dissertation Committee and student negotiate the details, nature, and timeline for necessary changes.
  - The Dissertation Committee member may take 10 business days to respond to dissertation revisions. Each Dissertation Committee member may then approve

the revisions or request additional revisions. The process of revision and modification may take several attempts before all members are fully satisfied with the revisions.

- Additionally, Dissertation Committee members may request a second Dissertation Defense Meeting if revisions are considered substantial.
- iii. Students may receive a 'Fail' decision. This means that at least one member of the Dissertation Committee decided that the dissertation is unsatisfactory and that a revision of the submitted dissertation will not be sufficient to meet the dissertation requirements.
  - A 'Fail' evaluation indicates that the study and/or presentation was flawed to such an extent that the dissertation and defense are unsalvageable.
  - The consequence of receiving a 'Fail' decision for the Dissertation Defense is that students must start a new dissertation project.
  - Examples of reasons that a student may 'Fail' the Dissertation Defense (without the option to revise/rewrite the submitted dissertation) include:
    - i. Not adhering to the Dissertation Committee and IRB-approved data collection and analysis plans.
    - ii. Engaging in academic dishonesty as outlined by the UTSA Code of Conduct (e.g., intentional and unintentional plagiarism, collusion, cheating, and falsifying academic records).
    - iii. Using generative AI in writing the dissertation.
    - iv. Intentionally falsifying data or engaging in ethical misconduct in research.
    - v. An inability to communicate findings in an acceptable way during the Dissertation Defense Meeting/Final Oral Examination.
    - vi. Failure to respond to Dissertation Committee revisions and guidance during the dissertation process.
  - In cases of academic dishonesty, students will be referred to Student Conduct and Community Standards, and the program Fitness to Practice process will be initiated.

Once the Dissertation Committee has formally approved (i.e., 'Passed') the dissertation, students will follow the final submission requirements as outlined by the Graduate School. As part of this process, the Dissertation Committee members sign the approval sheet for the doctoral dissertation (<https://graduateschool.utsa.edu/documents/faculty-staff/forms/doctoral-committee-forms/certification-of-completion-of-dissertation-requirements-for-doctoral-degree.pdf>).

The Graduate School may require additional formatting revisions to submitted dissertations, including those that have been approved by the Dissertation Committee. Students must complete all Graduate School requirements before the dissertation is considered to be 'complete.' *If students did not schedule a preliminary draft review with the Graduate School and the student's final draft does not meet the Graduate School formatting requirements, it is possible that students may not graduate in the semester they defended the dissertation.* Finally, it is customary to give each Dissertation Committee member a copy of the final dissertation.

## **Other Considerations for the Dissertation**

### **Dissertation Course Registration**

After students have passed the comprehensive qualifying examination and are admitted to candidacy, they must enroll in dissertation credits (via EDP 7993) in the next available semester

and must be enrolled in dissertation hours until the Dissertation Defense Meeting/Final Oral Examination is successfully completed (i.e., the Dissertation Committee unanimously votes to pass the student) **and** the final dissertation is submitted to and approved by the Graduate School. *Students will enroll in EDP 7993 under their Dissertation Chair's section.*

For the PhD in School Psychology program, the 3.0 credit hour Doctoral Dissertation course (EDP 7993) will be repeated for at least 9.0 credit hours, and 9.0 dissertation credits hours will be applied towards the degree. Students may take additional dissertation credit hours as needed; however, only 9.0 total dissertation credit hours will be applied toward the degree. *Any additional dissertation credit hours (beyond the first 9.0 hours) will not be applied towards the PhD in School Psychology degree.*

As needed, students may register for 1.0 dissertation credits hours per semester (via EDP 7991) after they have completed 9.0 credits hours of dissertation via three consecutive semesters of EDP 7993. Students must be enrolled in dissertation credit hours continuously while working on the dissertation. Thus, if students do not complete the dissertation before they begin internship, students must continue to enroll in dissertation credit hours (via EDP 7991) during internship and until the dissertation is complete.

Additionally, students must be enrolled for dissertation hours during the semester the student plans to defend the dissertation.

### **Continuous Dissertation Course Enrollment**

During each semester that a student receives advice and/or assistance with the dissertation from a faculty member, receives supervision from the Dissertation Committee (including the Dissertation Chair), and/or uses UTSA resources (e.g., library resources, technology, software) for the dissertation, they are required to enroll in a dissertation course (i.e., EDP 7993 or EDP 7991). Additionally, once a student begins working on their dissertation (i.e., once a student starts taking EDP 7993 or EDP 7991 after admission to candidacy), the only 'break' they are allowed from the dissertation (i.e., discontinuing enrollment in a dissertation course before the dissertation is complete) is if they take a formal leave of absence.

However, students may request a 'break' from enrolling in dissertation hours if they otherwise meet UTSA's continuous enrollment policy. For example, student's may take a 'break' from their dissertation if they are participating in an intensive practicum experience and are also maintaining full-time status via enrollment in other courses. **During this type of break, students are not permitted to work on their dissertation, not permitted to receive any advice and/or assistance with the dissertation from a faculty member, not permitted to receive supervision by the Dissertation Chair or other members of the Dissertation Committee, and not permitted to use UTSA resources (e.g., library resources, technology, software) for the dissertation**

*Note: Not maintaining continuous enrollment in dissertation courses represents a rare exception to standard Graduate School requirements, so students must consult with and receive permission from their Dissertation Chair, the PhD in School Psychology Graduate Advisor of Record, and the office of the Graduate School prior to taking any 'break' from dissertation course enrollment.*

### **Collaborative Institutional Training (CITI Program)**

All students must complete the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI Program) 'Social, Behavioral, and Educational (SBE) Sciences Responsible Conduct of Research Course.' The CITI Program training is accessed via the program website (<https://about.citiprogram.org/>). See <https://research.utsa.edu/files/pdfs/compliance-integrity-pdf-folder/irb-docs/UTSA-Instructions-for-CITI-training-Part-1-10.01.15.pdf> for registration instructions.

Students must submit proof of training by submitting the formal CITI program completion certification to the PhD in School Psychology Graduate Advisor of Record/Director of Clinical Training and to their Dissertation Chair. The training must be completed before students defend their Dissertation Proposal.

### **Institutional Review Board (IRB) and Compliance Approvals**

Dissertation research projects (and related data collection) cannot begin until all applicable compliance approvals have been obtained. Research involving human participants must be approved by UTSA Office of Research Integrity and Compliance (ORIC) via the university Institutional Review Board (IRB), which is there to protect the student doing the research study, the university, and the participants involved. All students must have IRB approval and the full dissertation proposal completed before collecting data.

Required application forms needed for requesting permission to use humans, or for any other compliance-related areas, must be submitted to ORIC for review and approval. This process can take several weeks, so it is important to allow sufficient time for the review process. Upon successful review, an official approval letter will be issued to students. When relevant, students must use copies of approved forms (typically indicated via an approval stamp) in their dissertation study, and students must follow all guidelines for the protection of human subjects and ethics in research. Copies of compliance approval letters must be included in an appendix in the dissertation when submitted to the Graduate School.

The Human Subjects application is currently located on the Research Integrity and Compliance website at: <http://www.utsa.edu/oric/irb/>

### **Doctoral Internship and the Dissertation**

As previously noted, students must have successfully completed the dissertation proposal before they can apply for internship. Students are also strongly encouraged to complete their dissertation prior to beginning internship. Thus, they spend their third year preparing for the dissertation and their fourth year completing their dissertation research/data collection, finalizing results and discussion chapters, and defending their final dissertation. Students who complete their dissertation during their fourth year can use their fifth year to focus exclusively on their doctoral internship and on applying for post-doctoral positions.

If students will not complete the dissertation before leaving for internship, they must submit to their Dissertation Chair and the PhD in School Psychology Graduate Advisor of Record/Director of Clinical Training a plan and timeline for completion of the dissertation. In these cases, students' plans must include:

- a) A clear plan for collecting dissertation data before internship; and

- b) A clear plan for completing data analysis and discussion sections during the first months of the internship year; and
- c) A specific timeline for submitting the complete dissertation to the Dissertation Committee, which must be done by the end of the fall semester of internship; and
- d) A specific timeline for defending the dissertation, which must be done by the spring break period of the spring semester of internship

This plan is necessary to ensure that students are ready to graduate by the time they have completed the doctoral internship.

Additionally, students that do not complete the dissertation prior to starting internship must be continually enrolled for at least 1.0 credit hours of Doctoral Dissertation (via EDP 7991) every semester until they complete all dissertation requirements. Thus, students that do not complete the dissertation prior to starting internship will be enrolled in both Doctoral Dissertation credit hours (via EDP 7991) and in Doctoral Internship (EDP 7943 or EDP 7942) during the internship year.

### **Writing Style and Formatting**

Dissertations for the PhD in School Psychology program must be written in accordance with APA style. Therefore, students should consult the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, 7<sup>th</sup> Edition (2020) when preparing their dissertation.

In addition, students must follow the formatting guidelines of the Graduate School when preparing the dissertation. The final dissertation submission must adhere to the most current dissertation formatting guidelines at time of submission or it will not be accepted. Formatting requirements are posted on the Graduate School website. To assist with this, the Graduate School has formatting templates, preparation guidelines, and FAQs to assist with formatting. For more information – including direct links for downloading dissertation templates – see: <https://graduateschool.utsa.edu/gps/formatting-requirements.html>

***Note: Students must download and use the dissertation templates provided by the Graduate School when preparing their dissertation. Students that do not use the dissertation templates are considered to be disregarding the requirements of the PhD in School Psychology program.***

### **Final Dissertation Submission Deadlines**

The Graduate School has set *firm* deadlines for final dissertation submissions. In order to be accepted, final dissertation copies submitted to the Graduate School must meet required formatting standards. Incorrectly formatted final dissertation copies will not be accepted. If students have to re-submit their final dissertations due to formatting issues, students may not meet established submission deadlines. This may result in students not graduating during an anticipated semester, as the final dissertation must be fully approved before students graduate.

See the Graduate School calendar regarding the due dates that final copies of the dissertation must be approved in order to qualify for graduation across each semester across the academic year (<https://graduateschool.utsa.edu/gps/thesis-dissertation-deadlines.html>).



## Publication of Dissertation

Students are required to make arrangements for publication of the final dissertation with the Graduate School. With written recommendation from the Dissertation Chair, the student may request that the Graduate School embargo the dissertation for one or more years in order to protect patents or other rights. Registration of copyright at the author's expense may also be arranged, if desired and appropriate, through ProQuest/UMI when uploading the final submission. Acceptance of the dissertation requires final approval from the Dean of the Graduate School.

*Note: Copies of dissertations will be made available to the general public through both the UTSA Library and ProQuest/UMI.*

## Graduation Dates and Commencement

A doctoral student intending to formally graduate in the summer term during which they complete their internship (i.e., summer of year 5 in the program) must have completed the successful defense of the dissertation and filed the appropriate documentation with the Graduate School by the start of that summer term. Additionally, the Graduate School must have approved the final dissertation by graduate deadline for the summer term. Once approved, students can be awarded their degrees in the summer. Degrees awarded in the summer will state a graduation date of August.

*Additionally, doctoral students may participate in commencement ceremonies only after completing all requirements for graduation, including the successful defense of the dissertation and subsequent acknowledgement by the Graduate School of all required documentation (including approval of the final dissertation submitted to the Graduate School). Thus, students completing their dissertation (and internship) during a summer semester term are eligible to participate in a December commencement ceremony, as there is no commencement ceremony in the summer. If students do not complete the dissertation by the time they finish the doctoral internship, their graduation will be further delayed.*

## Generative AI Policy

The dissertation represents originality in research, independent thinking, scholarly ability, and technical mastery of a field of study. **Furthermore, it is the responsibility of the Dissertation Committee to review and evaluate the dissertation as a representation of a student's individual effort.** As such, the use of generative AI (e.g., ChatGPT) in dissertations is considered unauthorized assistance and academic dishonesty by the Graduate Program Committee of the PhD in School Psychology program.

The use of generative AI for the dissertation is strictly prohibited. If students are found to have used generative AI in any part of the dissertation, the Dissertation Chair will make an Academic Dishonesty Referral to Student Conduct and Community Standards. Instances of academic dishonesty are taken seriously and are subject to disciplinary action (<https://www.utsa.edu/students/conduct/process/academic-dishonesty.html>). Disciplinary action may include, but is not limited to: failing grades for examinations/assignments, suspension from UTSA, permanent expulsion, denial of degree, and other sanction(s) as deemed appropriate (<https://catalog.utsa.edu/policies/administrativepoliciesandprocedures/studentcodeofconduct/>). Students that are found to have used generative AI in the dissertation will also be subject to the program Fitness to Practice Policy/Review process.



## Resources for Students

UTSA offers a variety of resources to assist students with the dissertation specifically, as well as with writing and student success generally. Following are some of the resources available to students that may help with the dissertation process.

### Dissertation Writing Camp

The Dissertation Writing Camp provides intensive, focused writing time in a quiet and supportive environment to help you make significant progress through the difficult stages of writing your doctoral dissertation. This program is for doctoral students who are starting or have started the writing portion of their dissertation manuscript. It is strongly recommended that your dissertation proposal has been approved by your committee before taking part in this camp. Camps are held during the Spring and Summer semester. For more information, see:

<https://graduateschool.utsa.edu/gps/dissertation-writing-camps.html>

### Formatting Assistance

The Graduate School offers dissertation formatting templates, preparation guidelines, and frequently asked questions to assist student in correctly formatting their dissertation document. UTSA Library Staff also offer preliminary draft reviews, and the Graduate School offers dissertation formatting and submission webinars. For more information, see:

<https://graduateschool.utsa.edu/gps/formatting-requirements.html>

### UTSA Writing Center

The Judith G. Gardner Center for Writing Excellence is the campus resource that helps the entire UTSA Community with various writing projects, questions, and challenges. Our experienced tutors provide assistance to current undergraduates, graduate students, and faculty/staff members with each step of the writing process: brainstorming, establishing a thesis, achieving coherence and unity, documenting, and revising. Our tutors will help you edit and proofread your essays and will help you improve your own editing skills. We encourage students to visit early and frequently throughout the writing process. You do not need to have a completed draft before you meet with a tutor. For more information, see:

<https://www.utsa.edu/twc/>

### Academic Student Success Coaching

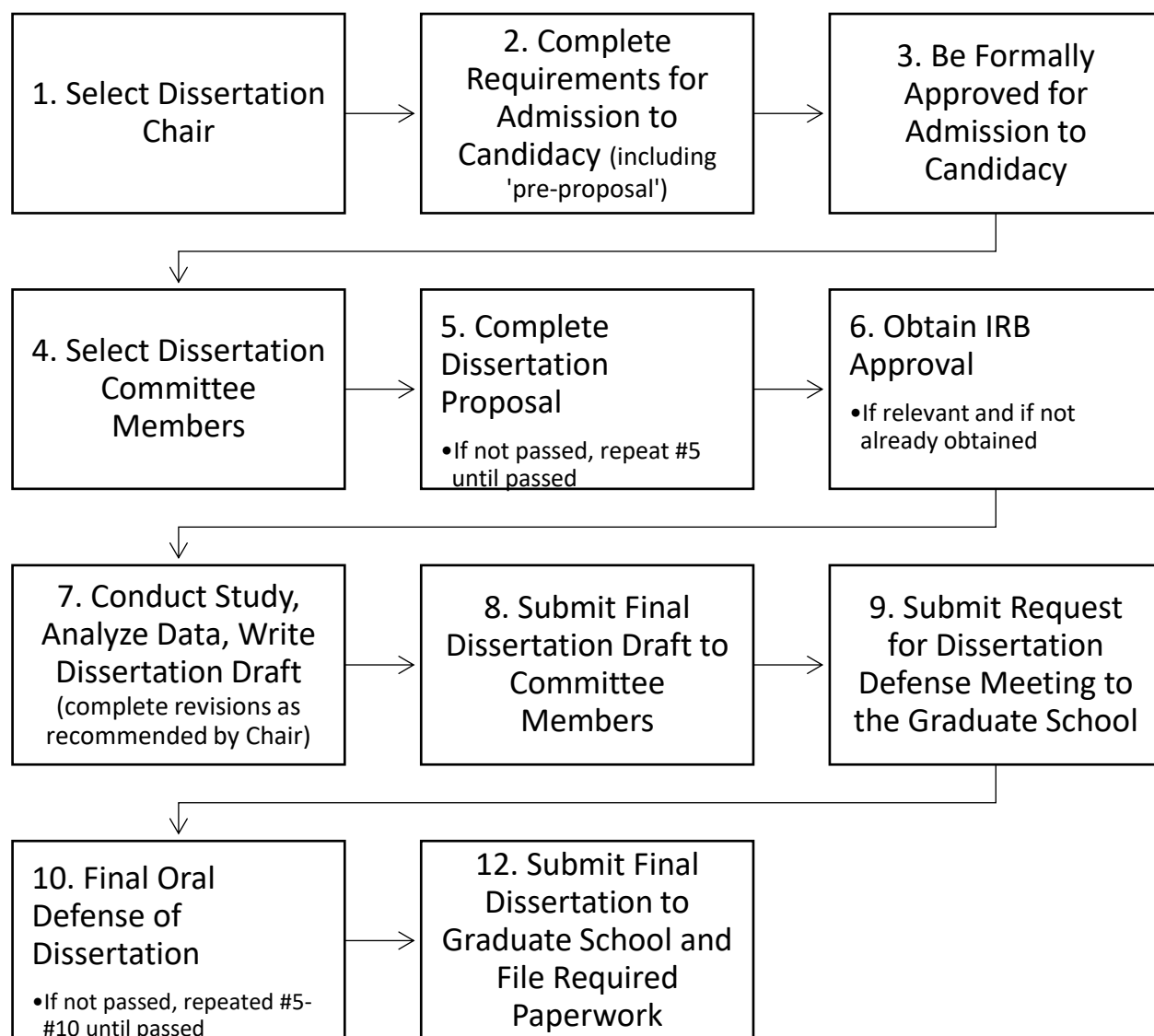
Via the Tomás Rivera Center, UTSA offers Academic Student Success Coaching. Student Success Coaching is a free service that academically supports students by supporting the whole student. Success Coaches work one-on-one with students to learn their goals, understand their obstacles, and light their way toward academic and personal growth for a richer, more fulfilling college experience. Students Success Coaches can help students with time management, finding balance, motivation, organization, and accessing other campus resources. For more information, see: <https://www.utsa.edu/studentsuccess/coaching/>

### Reference Books

Students may find the following books useful as they complete the dissertation:

- Bell, D. J., Foster, S. L., & Cone, J. C. (2019). *Dissertations and Theses From Start to Finish: Psychology and Related Fields (Third Edition)*.
- Lambert, N. M. (2013). *Publish and Prosper*.
- White, G. W. (2017). *The Dissertation Warrior: The Ultimate Guide to Being the Kind of Person Who Finishes a Doctoral Dissertation or Thesis*.

## Appendix A. Dissertation Process Flowchart



## Appendix B. Dissertation Proposal Rubric

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title of Dissertation Proposal: \_\_\_\_\_

Dissertation Committee Member Reviewer: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Oral Dissertation Proposal Presentation: \_\_\_\_\_

*For each area/dimension below, evaluate the candidate's performance using the following general scoring system (note: specific scoring criteria are further provided for each area/dimension):*

- 1) *Unsatisfactory – lacks clarity, focus, or depth; fails to meet the basic requirements; significant revision is needed*
- 2) *Emerging – approaches basic requirements, but lacks coherence and depth; further development and refinement are required to meet expectations*
- 3) *Proficient – generally clearly presented and demonstrates a solid understanding of the area; meets standard expectations*
- 4) *Exemplary – exceptional; demonstrates comprehensive understanding; shows high level of scholarly rigor and exceeds standard expectations*

### Prefatory Materials

Dimension	Unsatisfactory	Emerging	Proficient	Exemplary
<b>Provides a title page, abstract, table of contents and a list of figures and tables</b>	Abstract is not provided or is outside the range of 150-250 words; table of contents is omitted; lists of tables and figures are omitted or inaccurate	Abstract provides minimal and sometimes confusing information about the research proposed and is outside 150-250 word range; inaccurate or incomplete table of contents; inaccurate or incomplete lists of figures and tables	Abstract adequately addresses the research proposed within 150-250 words; accurate table of contents; accurate list of tables and figures provided	Abstract provides a crisp, complete 150-250 word summary of the research proposed; the table of contents, titles, and subheadings are complete and accurate; lists of tables and figures are complete and accurate

### Chapter 1: Introduction/Problem Statement

Dimension	Unsatisfactory	Emerging	Proficient	Exemplary
<b>Identifies a Problem</b>	Alludes to a situation where a problem might exist	Describes a situation and alludes to a problem	Identifies the problem and alludes to its boundaries (scope of the problem)	Clearly identifies the problem and its boundaries (scope of the problem)
<b>Context of the Problem</b>	Provides vague descriptions of	Vaguely situates the problem in	Generally situates the problem in	Clearly situates the problem

	context of problem and does not situate it in larger context	context (specific situations/ constraints/ conditions where problem occurs)	relevant contexts (specific situations/ constraints/ conditions where problem occurs)	through comprehensive analysis of its contexts (specific situations/ constraints/ conditions where problem occurs)
<b>Validates Significance of Problem</b>	Provides no evidence that the problem exists; unable to make a case for the significance of the problem	Provides minimal evidence that the problem exists; minimally describes the significance of the problem	Generally describes the existence of the problem; generally explains the significance of the problem	Draws upon multiple sources of information to substantiate the existence of the problem; clearly delineates the significant of the problem
<b>Purpose/ Rationale (Argument) for the Study</b>	Statement of the research purpose and the overall reasons for the study are not given	Statement of the research purpose and the overall reasons for the study are vague and marginally related to the background of the problem	Statement of the research purpose and the overall reasons for the study are clear and related to the background of the problem	Statement of the research purpose and the overall reasons for the study are compelling, apt and precise, and closely and clearly related to the background of the problem
<b>Introduces Methods and Research Questions</b>	Fails to introduce methods; includes no researchable questions; lacks connection between research questions, purpose, and problem	Introduces methods; lists a few researchable questions; makes weak connection between research questions, purpose, and problem	Introduces methods briefly; lists researchable question(s); makes connection between research questions, purpose, and problem	Introduces methods briefly but clearly describes methods; lists researchable question(s); makes clear and compelling connection between research questions, purpose, and problem
<b>Defines Key Concepts/ Terms</b>	No evidence that key terms are identified or defined	Attempts to define relevant concepts and terms	Defines key concepts and terms; begins to explain their relevance to the problem	Clearly defines and explains key concepts and terms and their relevance to the problem

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

Dimension	Unsatisfactory	Emerging	Proficient	Exemplary
<b>Identifies Relevant</b>	Selects inappropriate	Identifies framework(s) with	Identifies relevant theoretical	Clearly identifies relevant

<b>Theoretical Framework(s)</b>	theoretical framework(s); inaccurate definition/ descriptions of frameworks; makes no connection between framework(s) and problem	incomplete connection to the problem; does not provide cohesive connection between framework(s) and problem	framework(s); connects theoretical framework(s) to analyze the problem	theoretical framework(s); provides a rationale for selection of framework(s); insightfully connect framework(s) to analyze the problem
<b>Presents Research Literature Relevant to Problem (follows organizing principle that is evident to reader; sections support one another to make persuasive arguments)</b>	Does not discuss criteria for inclusion and exclusion from review; no organizing principle is mentioned; poorly organized, haphazard	Mentions inclusion and exclusion but does not elaborate; mentions organizing principle but does not elaborate; some coherent structure	Discusses literature included and excluded; presents organizing principle; discussion is coherent but could be further developed to indicate relevance of articles to addressing the problem	Justifies inclusion and exclusion of articles; presents high quality sources; presents organizing principle and applies it to the literature discussed; well-developed, coherent discussion of the literature and its relevance
<b>Synthesis (synthesizes research literature findings; identifies larger themes, inconsistencies and/or relevant patterns)</b>	Does not distinguish what has been done from what needs to be done	Some attempt to synthesize literature but incomplete with no mention of larger themes	Discussed what has been done and what has not been done, but sparse discussion of larger themes	Critically examines state of the field, identifies larger themes; mentions inconsistencies and relevant patterns.
<b>Critique of Previous Research</b>	No critique of previous research	Identifies previous research with weak connections to significance	Practical significance is discussed with mention of opposing views	Critiques practical and scholarly significance of previous research
<b>Reviews Methodological Literature (justifies selection of research methods based on review)</b>	No critique of methodological literature	Discusses methodological literature with incomplete connection to chosen method	Discusses existing methodological Literature; makes connection to chosen method	Critiques methodological literature; justifies selection of research methods
<b>Summarizes Conclusions from Literature</b>	No summary and no connection to methods chapter	Brief summary of literature	Complete summary of literature, with tentative conclusions; brief	Excellent and thorough summary from literature review; robust transition

<b>Reviews (includes transition to methods chapter)</b>			transition to methods chapter	to methods chapter
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### Chapter 3: Methods

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Unsatisfactory</b>	<b>Emerging</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>Exemplary</b>
<b>Type (describes if research is qualitative/ quantitative/ mixed-methods)</b>	No reference to type of method used	Vague reference to type of research being conducted; non-persuasive justification for the type of research used	Describes if research is qualitative or quantitative or mixed methods; provides adequate justification for selection of type in relation to research problem and research questions	Describes if research is qualitative or quantitative or mixed methods and defines type; provides clear justification for selection of type in relation to research problem and research questions
<b>Participants (identifies participants in the study and provides rationale for their selection; describes sampling methods)</b>	Unable to identify exact participants nor any reason for their selection to participate in the study	Vague identification of participants in the study; provides non-persuasive rationale for their selection; no sampling methods included	Identifies participants in the study; provides rationale for their selection; describes sampling methods	Clearly identifies participants in the study; provides compelling rationale for their selection; describes sampling methods concisely and clearly
<b>Procedures (describes procedures used to conduct the study for sample recruitment, informed consent, maintaining data; describes the steps taken during data collection and any interventions initiated; provides rationale for any intervention)</b>	Describes no procedures used to conduct the study for sample recruitment, informed consent, or maintaining data; describes no details of the protocols and steps taken during data collection; describes no protocols for any interventions initiated; provides no rationale for any intervention; many questions remain about the procedures and	Describes a few of the procedures used to conduct the study for sample recruitment, informed consent, and maintaining data; describes only a few details of the protocols and steps taken during data collection; describes vague protocols for any interventions initiated; provides weak, if any, rationale for any intervention; a few questions remain about the	Describes most of the procedures used to conduct the study for sample recruitment, informed consent, and maintaining data; describes most of the details of the protocols and steps taken during data collection; describes protocols for any interventions initiated; provides rationale for any intervention	Clearly describes the procedures used to conduct the study for sample recruitment, informed consent, and maintaining data; describes the step-by-step details of the protocols and steps taken during data collection; clearly describes protocols for any interventions initiated; provides compelling rationale for any intervention

	protocols and the rationales for any actions	procedures and protocols		
<b>Instruments/ Measures (describes data collection instruments; includes rationale for these instruments; includes copies of actual instruments to be used)</b>	Vague reference to data collection instruments; includes no rationale for the selection and format of instruments in reference to other choices; does not include copies of actual instruments to be used in appendix	Lists data collection instruments; includes weak rationale for selection and format of instruments in reference to other choices; does not include copies of actual instruments to be used in appendix.	Describes data collection instruments; includes rationale for selection and format of instruments in reference to other choices; includes copies of actual instruments to be used in appendix.	Fully describes data collection instruments; includes persuasive rationale for selection and format of instruments in reference to other choices; includes copies of actual instruments to be used in appendix.
<b>Data Analysis (describes data analysis procedures, including coding methods and statistical analysis, if appropriate)</b>	Vaguely describes data analysis procedures; does not tie procedures closely to research questions	Describes data analysis procedures, including coding methods and statistical analysis, if appropriate; ties procedures to research questions	Describes data analysis procedures, including detailed coding methods and statistical analysis, if appropriate; ties procedures closely to research questions	Clearly describes steps of data analysis procedures, including details of coding methods and statistical analysis, if appropriate; ties these closely to research questions

### Appendices

Dimension	Unsatisfactory	Emerging	Proficient	Exemplary
<b>Appendices (includes supplemental material including copies of instruments as used in the study)</b>	No appendices included when it is appropriate that they be included	Appendices include undeveloped or draft form of instruments used in study; some errors in APA formatting	Appendices include instruments used in the study with appropriate headings; uses APA formatting correctly; minor mistakes	Appendices include instruments as used in the study with appropriate headings on the page title; uses APA formatting correctly; no mistakes

### Overall Paper: Organization and Mechanics

Dimension	Unsatisfactory	Emerging	Proficient	Exemplary
<b>Organization</b>	Attempts to use organizational structures but inconsistent use of headings; poor transitions	Begins to use organizational structures (introduction, headings for each core area	Consistently uses organizational structures (introduction, headings for each core area with	Skillfully uses organizational structures (introduction, headings for each core area



	between chapters leads to disorganized paper; difficult for reader to follow	with clear transitions, sequenced material within the body, and conclusion) within the paper	clear transitions, sequenced material within the body, and conclusion) within the paper	with clear transitions, sequenced material within the body, and conclusion) within the paper; easy for reader to follow
<b>Mechanics</b>	Makes frequent errors in sentence structure, grammar, punctuation and/or spelling that interferes with comprehension	Makes errors in sentence structure, grammar, punctuation, and/or spelling that impede understanding	Makes minor errors in sentence structure, grammar, punctuation, and/or spelling that do not impede understanding	Demonstrates detailed attention to mechanics including sentence structure, grammar, punctuation, and spelling
<b>Citations</b>	Does not use APA style; lack of citations interferes with comprehension.	Inconsistently uses APA style in text citations and references	Generally uses correct APA style in text citations and references	Consistently uses correct APA style in text citations and references
<b>Bias in Language Use</b>	Does not use anti-bias language	Inconsistently uses APA style conventions to reduce bias in language	Generally adheres to APA style conventions to reduce bias in language	Consistently adheres to APA style conventions to reduce bias in language

### Oral Presentation of the Proposal

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Unsatisfactory</b>	<b>Emerging</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>Exemplary</b>
<b>Presentation of research topic, literature, and methods proposed in a clear, persuasive, and organized manner</b>	Candidate unprepared to present the study; presentation does not persuade audience that the study needs to be done	Presentation includes most significant elements, conveyed in an easy-to-follow format; responded to most questions.	Presentation included most significant components, conveyed in a logical, easy-to-follow format; responded to questions.	Presentation included all significant elements, conveyed clearly in a logical, persuasive and easy-to-follow format; responded to questions professionally



Recommendation - Select One (*note: the Dissertation Committee will deliberate and together come to a unanimous decision which may be different than any individual recommendation that was made before the deliberation*):

- ☐ Pass
- ☐ Not Yet Satisfactory (student is required to make revisions to the proposal but is not required to start a new proposal)
- ☐ Fail (student is required to start a new proposal or to make substantial changes to the current proposal that cannot be addressed through a straightforward revision)

If 'Not Yet Satisfactory' was selected, provide specific recommendations for revisions/additional work:

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If 'Fail' was selected, provide specific recommendations for the major concerns with the dissertation proposal that indicate that the proposal failed to meet basic requirements:

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***Note: Feedback will be provided to the student.***

## Appendix C. Dissertation Rubric

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title of Dissertation: \_\_\_\_\_

Dissertation Committee Member Reviewer: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Dissertation Defense Meeting: \_\_\_\_\_

*For each area/dimension below, evaluate the candidate's performance using the following general scoring system (note: specific scoring criteria are further provided for each area/dimension):*

- 1) *Unsatisfactory – lacks clarity, focus, or depth; fails to meet the basic requirements; significant revision is needed*
- 2) *Emerging – approaches basic requirements, but lacks coherence and depth; further development and refinement are required to meet expectations*
- 3) *Proficient – generally clearly presented and demonstrates a solid understanding of the area; meets standard expectations*
- 4) *Exemplary – exceptional; demonstrates comprehensive understanding; shows high level of scholarly rigor and exceeds standard expectations*

### Prefatory Materials

Dimension	Unsatisfactory	Emerging	Proficient	Exemplary
<b>Provides a title page, abstract, table of contents and a list of figures and tables</b>	Abstract is not provided or is outside the range of 150-250 words; table of contents is omitted; lists of tables and figures are omitted or inaccurate	Abstract provides minimal and sometimes confusing information about the research proposed and is outside 150-250 word range; inaccurate or incomplete table of contents; inaccurate or incomplete lists of figures and tables	Abstract adequately addresses the research proposed within 150-250 words; accurate table of contents; accurate list of tables and figures provided	Abstract provides a crisp, complete 150-250 word summary of the research proposed; the table of contents, titles, and subheadings are complete and accurate; lists of tables and figures are complete and accurate

### Chapter 1: Introduction/Problem Statement

Dimension	Unsatisfactory	Emerging	Proficient	Exemplary
<b>Identifies a Problem</b>	Alludes to a situation where a problem might exist	Describes a situation and alludes to a problem	Identifies the problem and alludes to its boundaries (scope of the problem)	Clearly identifies the problem and its boundaries (scope of the problem)
<b>Context of the Problem</b>	Provides vague descriptions of	Vaguely situates the problem in	Generally situates the problem in	Clearly situates the problem

	context of problem and does not situate it in larger context	context (specific situations/ constraints/ conditions where problem occurs)	relevant contexts (specific situations/ constraints/ conditions where problem occurs)	through comprehensive analysis of its contexts (specific situations/ constraints/ conditions where problem occurs)
<b>Validates Significance of Problem</b>	Provides no evidence that the problem exists; unable to make a case for the significance of the problem	Provides minimal evidence that the problem exists; minimally describes the significance of the problem	Generally describes the existence of the problem; generally explains the significance of the problem	Draws upon multiple sources of information to substantiate the existence of the problem; clearly delineates the significant of the problem
<b>Purpose/ Rationale (Argument) for the Study</b>	Statement of the research purpose and the overall reasons for the study are not given	Statement of the research purpose and the overall reasons for the study are vague and marginally related to the background of the problem	Statement of the research purpose and the overall reasons for the study are clear and related to the background of the problem	Statement of the research purpose and the overall reasons for the study are compelling, apt and precise, and closely and clearly related to the background of the problem
<b>Introduces Methods and Research Questions</b>	Fails to introduce methods; includes no researchable questions; lacks connection between research questions, purpose, and problem	Introduces methods; lists a few researchable questions; makes weak connection between research questions, purpose, and problem	Introduces methods briefly; lists researchable question(s); makes connection between research questions, purpose, and problem	Introduces methods briefly but clearly describes methods; lists researchable question(s); makes clear and compelling connection between research questions, purpose, and problem
<b>Defines Key Concepts/ Terms</b>	No evidence that key terms are identified or defined	Attempts to define relevant concepts and terms	Defines key concepts and terms; begins to explain their relevance to the problem	Clearly defines and explains key concepts and terms and their relevance to the problem

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

Dimension	Unsatisfactory	Emerging	Proficient	Exemplary
<b>Identifies Relevant</b>	Selects inappropriate	Identifies framework(s) with	Identifies relevant theoretical	Clearly identifies relevant

<b>Theoretical Framework(s)</b>	theoretical framework(s); inaccurate definition/ descriptions of frameworks; makes no connection between framework(s) and problem	incomplete connection to the problem; does not provide cohesive connection between framework(s) and problem	framework(s); connects theoretical framework(s) to analyze the problem	theoretical framework(s); provides a rationale for selection of framework(s); insightfully connect framework(s) to analyze the problem
<b>Presents Research Literature Relevant to Problem (follows organizing principle that is evident to reader; sections support one another to make persuasive arguments)</b>	Does not discuss criteria for inclusion and exclusion from review; no organizing principle is mentioned; poorly organized, haphazard	Mentions inclusion and exclusion but does not elaborate; mentions organizing principle but does not elaborate; some coherent structure	Discusses literature included and excluded; presents organizing principle; discussion is coherent but could be further developed to indicate relevance of articles to addressing the problem	Justifies inclusion and exclusion of articles; presents high quality sources; presents organizing principle and applies it to the literature discussed; well-developed, coherent discussion of the literature and its relevance
<b>Synthesis (synthesizes research literature findings; identifies larger themes, inconsistencies and/or relevant patterns)</b>	Does not distinguish what has been done from what needs to be done	Some attempt to synthesize literature but incomplete with no mention of larger themes	Discussed what has been done and what has not been done, but sparse discussion of larger themes	Critically examines state of the field, identifies larger themes; mentions inconsistencies and relevant patterns.
<b>Critique of Previous Research</b>	No critique of previous research	Identifies previous research with weak connections to significance	Practical significance is discussed with mention of opposing views	Critiques practical and scholarly significance of previous research
<b>Reviews Methodological Literature (justifies selection of research methods based on review)</b>	No critique of methodological literature	Discusses methodological literature with incomplete connection to chosen method	Discusses existing methodological Literature; makes connection to chosen method	Critiques methodological literature; justifies selection of research methods
<b>Summarizes Conclusions from Literature</b>	No summary and no connection to methods chapter	Brief summary of literature	Complete summary of literature, with tentative conclusions; brief	Excellent and thorough summary from literature review; robust transition

Reviews (includes transition to methods chapter)			transition to methods chapter	to methods chapter
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### Chapter 3: Methods

Dimension	Unsatisfactory	Emerging	Proficient	Exemplary
<b>Type (describes if research is qualitative/ quantitative/ mixed-methods)</b>	No reference to type of method used	Vague reference to type of research being conducted; non-persuasive justification for the type of research used	Describes if research is qualitative or quantitative or mixed methods; provides adequate justification for selection of type in relation to research problem and research questions	Describes if research is qualitative or quantitative or mixed methods and defines type; provides clear justification for selection of type in relation to research problem and research questions
<b>Participants (identifies participants in the study and provides rationale for their selection; describes sampling methods)</b>	Unable to identify exact participants nor any reason for their selection to participate in the study	Vague identification of participants in the study; provides non-persuasive rationale for their selection; no sampling methods included	Identifies participants in the study; provides rationale for their selection; describes sampling methods	Clearly identifies participants in the study; provides compelling rationale for their selection; describes sampling methods concisely and clearly
<b>Procedures (describes procedures used to conduct the study for sample recruitment, informed consent, maintaining data; describes the steps taken during data collection and any interventions initiated; provides rationale for any intervention)</b>	Describes no procedures used to conduct the study for sample recruitment, informed consent, or maintaining data; describes no details of the protocols and steps taken during data collection; describes no protocols for any interventions initiated; provides no rationale for any intervention; many questions remain about the procedures and	Describes a few of the procedures used to conduct the study for sample recruitment, informed consent, and maintaining data; describes only a few details of the protocols and steps taken during data collection; describes vague protocols for any interventions initiated; provides weak, if any, rationale for any intervention; a few questions remain about the	Describes most of the procedures used to conduct the study for sample recruitment, informed consent, and maintaining data; describes most of the details of the protocols and steps taken during data collection; describes protocols for any interventions initiated; provides rationale for any intervention	Clearly describes the procedures used to conduct the study for sample recruitment, informed consent, and maintaining data; describes the step-by-step details of the protocols and steps taken during data collection; clearly describes protocols for any interventions initiated; provides compelling rationale for any intervention

	protocols and the rationales for any actions	procedures and protocols		
<b>Instruments/ Measures (describes data collection instruments; includes rationale for these instruments; includes copies of actual instruments to be used)</b>	Vague reference to data collection instruments; includes no rationale for the selection and format of instruments in reference to other choices; does not include copies of actual instruments to be used in appendix	Lists data collection instruments; includes weak rationale for selection and format of instruments in reference to other choices; does not include copies of actual instruments to be used in appendix.	Describes data collection instruments; includes rationale for selection and format of instruments in reference to other choices; includes copies of actual instruments to be used in appendix.	Fully describes data collection instruments; includes persuasive rationale for selection and format of instruments in reference to other choices; includes copies of actual instruments to be used in appendix.
<b>Data Analysis (describes data analysis procedures, including coding methods and statistical analysis, if appropriate)</b>	Vaguely describes data analysis procedures; does not tie procedures closely to research questions	Describes data analysis procedures, including coding methods and statistical analysis, if appropriate; ties procedures to research questions	Describes data analysis procedures, including detailed coding methods and statistical analysis, if appropriate; ties procedures closely to research questions	Clearly describes steps of data analysis procedures, including details of coding methods and statistical analysis, if appropriate; ties these closely to research questions

#### Chapter 4: Analysis/Results/Findings

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Unsatisfactory</b>	<b>Emerging</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>Exemplary</b>
<b>Data Analysis</b>	Inappropriate analysis of data; not connected to research question and purpose	Appropriate analysis of most of the data; vaguely connected to research question and purpose	Appropriate analysis of data; connected to research question and purpose	Appropriate and thoughtful analysis of data; clearly connected to research question and purpose
<b>Presentation of Results</b>	Inaccessible and confusing presentation of results; very limited variety of charts, tables, or data displays included.	Somewhat accessible and understandable presentation of results; limited variety of charts, tables or data displays included	Accessible and understandable presentation of results; variety of charts, tables, or data displays included	Easily accessible and clearly understandable presentation of results; variety of charts, tables, or data displays included
<b>Interpretation of findings</b>	Findings not interpreted correctly and are	Findings interpreted and sometimes	Findings interpreted correctly and	Findings interpreted correctly and

	not supported by evidence nor linked to research questions	supported by evidence and vaguely linked to research questions	supported by evidence and address research questions	directly supported by evidence and clearly address research questions
<b>Limitations</b>	Does not identify limitations of the study and analysis of data	Acknowledges a few limitations of the study and analysis of data	Identifies limitations of the study and analysis of data	Identifies limitations of the study and analysis of data

### Chapter 5: Discussion/Conclusion/Implications

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Unsatisfactory</b>	<b>Emerging</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>Exemplary</b>
<b>Synthesis of Findings</b>	Limited or no discussion of major findings/ outcomes; conclusions/ summaries are inappropriate and not linked to findings/ outcomes	Discussion of major findings/ outcomes; conclusions/ summaries are sometimes appropriate but not clearly linked to findings/ outcomes	Discussion of major findings/ outcomes; conclusions/ summaries are mostly appropriate and linked to findings/ outcomes	Brief and concise discussion of major findings/ outcomes; conclusions/ summaries are appropriate and linked to findings/ outcomes
<b>Situated in Larger Context</b>	Presentation is not accurate nor engaging; presentation is not situated in larger context	Presentation is accurate but not engaging; presentation is not situated in larger context	Presentation is accurate and engaging; presentation is situated in larger context; findings related to research literature or theoretical frame	Presentation is accurate, engaging, and thought provoking; presentation is situated in larger context; findings related to research literature and theoretical frame
<b>Recommendations/ Implications</b>	Recommendations are not included; no attention paid to implications	Recommendations are sometimes appropriate but not clearly linked to findings/ outcomes	Recommendations are appropriate and linked to findings/ outcomes; implications for policy/practice included.	Recommendations are insightful, appropriate and linked to findings/ outcomes; implications for policy/ practice included; implications linked to the data

### Overall Paper: Organization and Mechanics

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Unsatisfactory</b>	<b>Emerging</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>Exemplary</b>
<b>Organization</b>	Attempts to use organizational structures but inconsistent use of headings; poor transitions	Begins to use organizational structures (introduction, headings for each core area	Consistently uses organizational structures (introduction, headings for each core area with	Skillfully uses organizational structures (introduction, headings for each core area

	between chapters leads to disorganized paper; difficult for reader to follow	with clear transitions, sequenced material within the body, and conclusion) within the paper	clear transitions, sequenced material within the body, and conclusion) within the paper	with clear transitions, sequenced material within the body, and conclusion) within the paper; easy for reader to follow
<b>Mechanics</b>	Makes frequent errors in sentence structure, grammar, punctuation and/or spelling that interferes with comprehension	Makes errors in sentence structure, grammar, punctuation, and/or spelling that impede understanding	Makes minor errors in sentence structure, grammar, punctuation, and/or spelling that do not impede understanding	Demonstrates detailed attention to mechanics including sentence structure, grammar, punctuation, and spelling
<b>Citations</b>	Does not use APA style; lack of citations interferes with comprehension.	Inconsistently uses APA style in text citations and references	Generally uses correct APA style in text citations and references	Consistently uses correct APA style in text citations and references
<b>Bias in Language Use</b>	Does not use anti-bias language	Inconsistently uses APA style conventions to reduce bias in language	Generally adheres to APA style conventions to reduce bias in language	Consistently adheres to APA style conventions to reduce bias in language

### Appendices

Dimension	Unsatisfactory	Emerging	Proficient	Exemplary
<b>Appendices (includes supplemental material including copies of instruments as used in the study)</b>	No appendices included when it is appropriate that they be included	Appendices include undeveloped or draft form of instruments used in study; some errors in APA formatting	Appendices include instruments used in the study with appropriate headings; uses APA formatting correctly; minor mistakes	Appendices include instruments as used in the study with appropriate headings on the page title; uses APA formatting correctly; no mistakes

### Oral Presentation of the Dissertation Defence

Dimension	Unsatisfactory	Emerging	Proficient	Exemplary
<b>Presentation of research topic, literature, methods, results, and discussion proposed in a</b>	Candidate unprepared to present the study; presentation confusing and poorly delivered	Presentation includes most significant elements, conveyed in an easy-to-follow	Presentation included most significant components, conveyed in a logical, easy-to-follow format;	Presentation included all significant elements, conveyed clearly in a logical, persuasive and



clear, persuasive, and organized manner		format; responded to most questions.	responded to questions.	easy-to-follow format; responded to questions professionally
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Recommendation - Select One (*note: the Dissertation Committee will deliberate and together come to a unanimous decision which may be different than any individual recommendation that was made before the deliberation*):

- ☐ Pass (student passes the dissertation defense with only minor [or no] recommendations recommended)
- ☐ Not Yet Satisfactory (student is required to make revisions to the submitted dissertation before the dissertation is approved)
- ☐ Fail (student fails the dissertation and is not permitted to revise/resubmit the dissertation; student must start the dissertation anew, likely with a different topic)

If 'Not Yet Satisfactory' was selected, provide specific recommendations for revisions/additional work:

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If 'Fail' was selected, provide specific recommendations for the major concerns with the dissertation that indicate that the dissertation failed to meet basic requirements:

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***Note: Feedback will be provided to the student.***

## Appendix D. Multiple-Essay Dissertation Format Guidelines

Students are permitted to use a multiple-essay (i.e., multiple-chapter) dissertation format for the PhD in School Psychology program if the Dissertation Committee approves this format as part of the dissertation proposal process. If students do not get explicit permission to use the multiple essay format from their Dissertation Committee, then students must use the 'traditional' format.'

This appendix provides additional guidance for the multiple-essay dissertation format.

1. All essays uses in the multiple-essay format should form a cohesive body of work that supports a theme(s) that are expressed clearly in the introduction of the dissertation (i.e., chapter 1). Students must make a strong case for the need for multiple essay, and the use of the multiple-essay format must not merely represent minor tweaks of a work that would be more appropriately reported in the 'traditional format.'
2. The dissertation must include an abstract, introduction, and conclusion that clearly synthesize all essays submitted as part of the multiple-essay format. Synthesis is demonstrated by the ability to weave together the various essays in a way that effectively communicates their relatedness, collective meaning, and value as a combined contribution. Students should not use the multiple-essay format if they are unable to effectively synthesize their multiple essays.
3. A maximum of one article already published or accepted for publication prior to the dissertation proposal may be included as part of one essay in the multiple-essay format. This article must represent work undertaken while the student is enrolled in the PhD in School Psychology program, must be clearly connected to the theme(s) of the dissertation, and must be based on significant student effort on the article (i.e., the student must be the first author). The be included in the multiple-essay dissertation, previously published articles must be approved by the Dissertation Committee.
4. For all essays submitted as part of the multiple-essay format, the student's contribution must be equivalent to 'first author' contribution of a research study or publication. If students cannot demonstrate 'first author' contributions to essays, then those essays should not be included in the dissertation. The extent to which student contributions to essays represents 'first author' contribution will be determined by the student's Dissertation Committee.
5. At least one of the essays in the multiple-essay format must be based on data that are analyzed by the student. Other essays may be conceptual in nature, or based on a synthesis of the literature, but all essays must be connected to a clear dissertation theme.
6. The content of multiple essays submitted as part of the multiple-essay format should not overlap heavily. While some overlap is acceptable, excessive redundancy and overlap that approaches self-plagiarism is prohibited. The extent to which essay overlap is considered excessive will be determined by the student's Dissertation Committee.

**The Dissertation Committee must only approve a multiple-essay dissertation format after they reviewed these guidelines and determined that the proposed dissertation is a good fit for this format.**