

# LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

## SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

DOCTORAL PROGRAMS  
DISSERTATION HANDBOOK  
2022-2023

---

This handbook is a guide to the dissertation process for Liberty University School of Education doctoral students. It does not constitute a contract and is subject to change at the discretion of Liberty University School of Education. This version of the dissertation handbook supersedes all previous versions.

Liberty University  
1971 University Blvd.  
Lynchburg, VA 24515  
Fall 2021

### **Administration and Support Team for Doctoral Programs**

|                              |  |                        |
|------------------------------|--|------------------------|
| <b>Dr. Anita Satterlee</b>   | Interim Administrative Chair of Doctoral Programs and Research | asatterlee@liberty.edu |
| <b>Dr. Michelle Barthlow</b> | Director of Quantitative Doctoral Research                     | mjbarthlow@liberty.edu |
| <b>Dr. Meredith Park</b>     | Director of Qualitative Doctoral Research                      | mjpark@liberty.edu     |
| <b>Megan Engberg</b>         | Director of Doctoral Programs                                  | mestinson2@liberty.edu |
| <b>TBA</b>                   | Coordinator of Doctoral Student Support                        | TBA                    |
| <b>Melanie Cox</b>           | Doctoral Secretary   | mccox2@liberty.edu     |
| <b>Mason Lecik</b>           | Coordinator of Doctoral Candidate Support                      | mlecik1@liberty.edu    |
| <b>Rachel Hewat</b>          | Coordinator of Doctoral Programs Operations                    | rhewat@liberty.edu     |

## Table of Contents

|   |    |
|---|----|
| 1. Introduction.....  | 5  |
| 1.1 Introduction to the Doctoral Program and the Dissertation Process ..... | 5  |
| 1.2 Purpose of this Handbook.....   | 5  |
| 2. Academic Policies and Specialized Coursework.....                        | 5  |
| 2.1 Time Limit for Completion of the Degree .....                           | 6  |
| 2.2 Number of NP Grades.....  | 6  |
| 2.3 Course Enrollment Limits.....   | 6  |
| 2.4 Continuous Enrollment Policy .....                                      | 7  |
| 2.5 SOE Doctoral Community.....   | 7  |
| 3. The Dissertation Committee .....   | 8  |
| 3.1 Chair and Committee Selection (Committee Member Form).....              | 9  |
| 4. Dissertation Guidelines.....   | 10 |
| 4.1 Dissertation Research Topics.....                                       | 10 |
| 4.2 Dissertation Research Designs.....                                      | 11 |
| 4.3 Recommended Textbooks.....  | 12 |
| 4.4 Academic Honesty .....  | 13 |
| 5. The Prospectus .....   | 13 |
| 6. Proposal.....  | 14 |
| 6.1 Develop the Proposal .....  | 14 |
| 6.2 Proposal Review: Milestone One.....                                     | 15 |
| 6.3 The Proposal Defense.....   | 16 |
| 6.4 Defend the Proposal: Milestone Two .....                                | 16 |

|   |    |
|---|----|
| 7. IRB.....   | 17 |
| 7.1 Submit IRB Application(s).....  | 17 |
| 7.2 Receive IRB Approval: Milestone Three .....                             | 19 |
| 8. The Dissertation .....   | 19 |
| 8.1 Execute the Research and Develop Dissertation Manuscript .....          | 19 |
| 8.2 Dissertation Review: Milestone Four .....                               | 20 |
| 8.3 Submit the Dissertation Manuscript for a Professional Edit.....         | 20 |
| 8.4 Schedule a Dissertation Defense (Register for EDUC/EDDR 990).....       | 21 |
| 8.5 Pre-defense.....  | 22 |
| 8.6 Preparing for the Defense .....   | 22 |
| 8.7 Defend the Dissertation: Milestone Five.....                            | 23 |
| 9. Publication and Graduation.....  | 24 |
| Appendix A: Dissertation Committee Qualifications and Responsibilities..... | 25 |
| Appendix B: Approved Quantitative Designs and Data Analysis .....           | 27 |
| Appendix C: Dissertation Approval Process .....                             | 28 |
| Appendix D: Quantitative Dissertation Template.....                         | 29 |
| Appendix E: Qualitative Dissertation Template.....                          | 30 |
| Appendix F: Applied Dissertation Template .....                             | 31 |

## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1 Introduction to the Doctoral Program and the Dissertation Process**

The doctoral programs in the School of Education (SOE) consist of two primary components: the coursework and the dissertation. The student completes coursework to develop and hone critical thinking skills, writing skills, and knowledge. The purpose of the coursework is to prepare the student to become a doctoral candidate. The doctoral dissertation is the final academic requirement for the doctoral program and is designed to evaluate the candidate's capabilities as a scholar. It is often more difficult and can often take longer to complete than the coursework.

### **1.2 Purpose of this Handbook**

The purpose of this handbook is to provide information about the dissertation process and related policies. The handbook is a guide for the dissertation, including the writing, the proposal defense, and the final dissertation. In general terms, the roles and responsibilities of the candidate and the committee are outlined. Because the completed dissertation is a publication of Liberty University and represents the university, the SOE, and the author, candidates are expected to maintain high standards concerning the content and appearance of their dissertations.

## **2. Academic Policies and Specialized Coursework**

There are several academic policies that pertain specifically to the doctoral programs in the SOE. Some of the policies are dependent upon the specific degree completion plan (DCP) under which the student is working. More information about these policies is detailed below.

## **2.1 Time Limit for Completion of the Degree**

The maximum time limit for completion of the doctoral program is seven years. Any student who does not complete coursework within the permissible time limit for any reason, including discontinued enrollment, must reapply for admission. If the student wishes to continue in the program at a later date, he or she will need to reapply and, if accepted, will be subject to all requirements for the DCP for the current academic year. A student may reapply to the program only once, and the Administrative Chair of Doctoral Programs and Research will determine how many additional semesters will be granted. Students who wish to appeal for extra time in the program should submit a formal appeal via the [SOE Policy Appeals Form](#).

## **2.2 Number of NP Grades**

Students are only allowed one No Pass (NP) grade in any one course as part of the doctoral program. Two NPs in any one course will result in removal from the program. This policy applies specifically to EDUC 970, 980, 987, 988, 989, and 990, as well as EDDR 980, 981, 987, 988, 989, and 990. Candidates must earn at least 840 points in these courses for a passing grade.

## **2.3 Course Enrollment Limits**

Candidates will enroll only one time each in EDUC/EDDR 987 and 988. Candidates who complete the course assignments and earn at least 840 points (Passing Grade) in EDUC/EDDR 987 and 988 should move on to the next course in the sequence in the following semester. Once candidates reach EDUC/EDDR 989, they must defend the completed dissertation within two enrollments in this course. Exceeding the EDUC/EDDR 989 enrollment limit will result in removal from the program. If a candidate has exceeded the enrollment limit but wishes to continue in the program, he or she must submit a formal appeal via the [SOE Policy Appeals Form](#).

in order to request an extension. Each student must include a full justification of the request and, if applicable, documentation evidencing his or her chair's support of the extension.

If an appeal for an extension is approved, the Administrative Chair of Doctoral Programs and Research will determine the new deadline for program completion. Any student who does not complete coursework within the permissible time limit for any reason, including discontinued enrollment, must reapply for admission. If students wish to continue in the program at a later date, they need to reapply and, if accepted, will be subject to all requirements for the DCP for the current academic year.

## **2.4 Continuous Enrollment Policy**

After completion of EDUC 980, EDDR 980, or EDDR 981, students must be continually enrolled in the program until completion of EDUC/EDDR 990 (Dissertation IV). Continuous enrollment means that the student must be enrolled in at least one course that will count toward completion of the doctoral program per semester (including summer). Failure to maintain continuous enrollment will result in removal from the program. If students wish to continue in the program at a later date, they need to reapply and, if accepted, will be subject to all requirements for the DCP for the current academic year.

**Note:** Students returning to the program after breaking enrollment for more than one year may be required to complete additional coursework or retake courses at the discretion of the Administrative Chair of Doctoral Programs and Research.

## **2.5 SOE Doctoral Community**

The [SOE Doctoral Community](#) is a Canvas site that houses important information about the dissertation process. While this handbook provides a general guide for the dissertation

process, the SOE Doctoral Community provides more detailed step-by-step information for each milestone in the dissertation process.

### 3. The Dissertation Committee

The standard dissertation committee for the doctoral program consists of two members: (a) a dissertation chair and (b) a committee member. One of the two, either the chair or committee member, must be an approved methodologist (see note below). Each candidate should officially begin the process of securing a chair and committee member by the conclusion of EDUC 980 or EDDR 980/981. Often the chair and committee member are officially secured just before the start of the candidate's first dissertation course. A candidate's dissertation committee must include the following:

1. **Committee Chair:** A *committee chair* must hold an earned doctoral degree (Ed.D. or Ph.D.) in an education-related field and be employed by LU (residential or online). See Appendix A for more information about chair qualifications and responsibilities. See the [SOE Doctoral Community](#) in Canvas for the approved Chair/Committee Member search list.
2. **Committee Member:** A *committee member* must hold an earned doctoral degree (Ed.D. or Ph.D.) in an education-related field and be employed by LU (residential or online). See Appendix A for more information about committee member qualifications and responsibilities. See the [SOE Doctoral Community](#) in Canvas for the approved Chair/Committee Member search list.

**Note:** One member of the committee, either the chair or committee member, must be a Liberty SOE certified research methodologist. Liberty SOE certified research methodologists are trained researchers in quantitative and/or qualitative research. They have demonstrated an

established record of research, evidenced by their professional contributions to the field of education through peer-reviewed publications and conference presentations. They have experience in chairing and sitting as a committee member on numerous dissertation committees. Before being invited to serve as a Liberty SOE certified research methodologist, the methodologist's coursework, dissertation, publications, presentations, and teaching ability are considered. The methodologist is required to sit through an interview by a team of Liberty SOE research faculty before certification is granted. See the [SOE Doctoral Community](#) in Canvas for the certified methodologist search list.

### **3.1 Chair and Committee Selection (Committee Member Form)**

The [SOE Doctoral Community](#) in Canvas contains a section called Committee Search, which houses information about SOE approved chairs and committee members. In EDUC 980 or EDDR 980/981, candidates will be directed to access that section of the SOE Doctoral Community to begin the process of securing a prospective chair and committee member. Either the chair or the committee member must be a Liberty SOE certified research methodologist.

Candidates should first reach out to prospective chairs one at a time. A mass email must never be sent to multiple faculty members. When contacting potential chairs and committee members, the candidate needs to organize and provide a complete methods chapter for a dissertation or a complete prospectus. Candidates who need assistance selecting a prospective chair can email [SOEDocPrograms@liberty.edu](mailto:SOEDocPrograms@liberty.edu) with an attached dissertation prospectus or methods chapter, as well as the names of any chairs already contacted, and the Doctoral Support Team will assist them in the committee search process.

If a chair indicates he or she is willing to serve on the committee, then the prospective chair and the candidate can discuss inviting the committee member. When the chair and candidate

identify a willing committee member, the candidate will complete the Committee Member Form, available in EDUC 980 or EDDR 980/981. All committee requests must be approved by the Doctoral Support Team. The Committee Member Form will be reviewed, and candidates will be notified whether or not their chair and committee member selections are approved.

Even though a chair and/or committee member may indicate their willingness to serve on a committee, the Doctoral Support Team will still need to review the official request through the Committee Member Form to ensure these faculty members are approved to take on additional chairing or committee member roles at that time. If a chair or committee request is not approved, the Doctoral Support Team can assist in finding available faculty to serve as the chair or committee member.

**Note:** Once a chair and committee member are approved, changes to the committee will only be considered when there are extenuating circumstances. Under these circumstances, the candidate should contact the Doctoral Support Team at [SOEDocPrograms@liberty.edu](mailto:SOEDocPrograms@liberty.edu) to seek approval for a change in committee. The Doctoral Support Team is available to assist you with any questions or concerns during the dissertation process, and candidates should contact [SOEDocPrograms@liberty.edu](mailto:SOEDocPrograms@liberty.edu) immediately if they encounter any issues, such as concerns with committee members.

## 4. Dissertation Guidelines

### 4.1 Dissertation Research Topics

Students should start considering dissertation topics upon entry to the program. When opportunities exist, students should research the topic of interest in the form of literature reviews and related papers for doctoral coursework. **It is important to understand that a research *topic* is not the same as a *research study*.** A topic is general in nature, whereas a research study is very

narrow in focus with defined methods to answer a particular question(s).

Candidates are encouraged to pursue dissertation topics that are of personal relevance and significance; however, a candidate needs to ensure that the topic is researchable. It is wise to avoid topics that are overly ambiguous, challenging, and esoteric. Further, it is never ethical to conduct research where the researcher has any type of direct authority over the participants (e.g., teacher, professor, or administrator). Ideally, the research topic should be within the expertise and research interests of the potential dissertation chair. To become familiar with the SOE faculty and their research interests, candidates are encouraged to dialogue with faculty throughout their coursework, as well as look through the Chair/Committee Member search list in the [SOE Doctoral Community](#) in Canvas while enrolled in EDUC 980 or EDDR 980/981.

Faith integration within the dissertation is acceptable where appropriate. If a faith perspective is included, it should be well-integrated throughout the manuscript (not included as an afterthought or simply tacked on).

#### **4.2 Dissertation Research Designs**

Dissertations may consist of various research designs; however, all research studies for the purpose of a doctoral dissertation should include a rigorous production of scholarly knowledge. Candidates will choose either a quantitative or qualitative method and may choose from the designs outlines below.

##### ***Quantitative***

Please see Appendix B for the complete list of approved quantitative designs and data analysis. If a candidate wishes to use an alternate quantitative design, he or she will need to provide a rationale and seek approval from the Administrative Chair of Doctoral Programs and Research.

**Note:** Ph.D. candidates must collect original data. The use of archival data is not permitted for Ph.D. dissertations.

### ***Qualitative***

For qualitative research, a candidate may choose to utilize phenomenological or case study designs. If a candidate wishes to use an alternate design, he or she will need to provide a rationale and seek approval from the Administrative Chair of Doctoral Programs and Research.

### ***Applied***

The applied dissertation has been discontinued as of the fall of 2019. Only Ed.D. candidates on the 2018-2019 DCPs may choose an applied study for the dissertation. If an Ed.D. student on the 2018-2019 DCP successfully completes EDUC 816 and EDUC 919 (Professional Writing & Research, applied section) or EDUC 812, EDUC 815, EDUC 817, and EDUC 919 (Professional Writing & Research, applied section), then he or she may do an applied dissertation. Ed.D. candidates who are considering an applied dissertation may want to consider moving to a newer degree completion plan to complete the applied capstone project instead.

## **4.3 Recommended Textbooks**

It is highly recommended that candidates retain their textbooks from their previous research and methods courses. These include:

### **Quantitative Textbooks.**

Warner, R. (2021). *Applied statistics I: Basic bivariate techniques* (3rd ed.). Sage Publications.

or

Warner, R. (2013). *Applied statistics: From bivariate through multivariate techniques* (2nd ed.).

Sage Publications.

Gall, M. D., Gall, J. P., & Borg, W. R. (2007). *Educational research: An introduction* (8th ed.).

Pearson.

### **Qualitative Textbooks.**

Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches* (3rd ed.). Sage Publications.

Patton, M. (2002). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Sage Publications.

Schwandt, T. (2007). *The Sage dictionary of qualitative inquiry* (3rd ed.). Sage Publications.

## **4.4 Academic Honesty**

Honesty and integrity are highly valued at LU and in the SOE. The same principles and expectations of academic honesty and integrity in coursework are true for the dissertation. The [Liberty University Honor Code](#) details specific definitions, penalties, and processes of reporting. The presence of plagiarism, including structural plagiarism, within any dissertation manuscript or document, may result in dismissal from the program, failing the dissertation course, and/or implementation of an intervention plan. The dissertation chair, the committee, and the SOE administration decide the final consequences of academic dishonesty.

The dissertation needs to be an original work of the candidate, and the reuse of previous research (e.g., master's theses, publications) is not acceptable. All previous work needs to be cited according to the current American Psychological Association (APA) guidelines, and the APA manual's section on self-plagiarism should be reviewed. Properly crediting another individual's work is also an ethical imperative.

## **5. The Prospectus**

Upon enrollment in EDUC 980 or EDDR 980/981, students are officially considered doctoral candidates. In EDUC 980 or EDDR 980/981, the candidate develops a complete research prospectus. The Quantitative, Qualitative, or Applied Dissertation Template (located in

the [SOE Doctoral Community](#) in Canvas) is used to develop the prospectus. The prospectus, comprised of Chapters One, Two, and Three of the dissertation, is the first formal document candidates write as part of the dissertation process. The prospectus is expected to be foundational to the formal proposal and then ultimately to the dissertation manuscript. All other elements of the first three chapters of a dissertation are present. The prospectus is typically from 30 to 50 pages long, with a literature review (Chapter Two) of at least 15 pages.

The primary assignment in EDUC 980 or EDDR 980/981 is the prospectus. To earn a pass on this assignment, the candidate is expected to incorporate all feedback from previous dissertation courses leading up to EDUC 980 or EDDR 980/981. When submitting the manuscript for review, candidates must use correct APA formatting and grammar and ensure the research design and analysis sections include scholarly research text references. It is highly recommended that EDUC 980 or EDDR 980/981 be taken when the candidate has sufficient time to devote to developing a solid prospectus. Failure to do so could result in not passing EDUC 980 or EDDR 980/981, and this course may only be taken twice.

Upon entrance into the first dissertation course, all feedback from the EDUC 980 or EDDR 980/981 course should be discussed with the chair and committee member. Failure to implement the feedback, especially in regard to research design and analysis, will result in significant delays in the dissertation process.

## **6. Proposal**

### **6.1 Develop the Proposal**

After successful completion of EDUC 980 or EDDR 980/981, the candidate enrolls in the dissertation course sequence. Upon enrollment in the appropriate dissertation course, the candidate immediately begins working with his or her committee to develop a solid dissertation

proposal. The proposal needs to consist, at a minimum, of the following: *Title Page, Chapter One: Introduction, Chapter Two: Literature Review, Chapter Three: Methods*, plus *References*, and *Appendices* with participant letters, Institutional Review Board (IRB) applications, and for quantitative studies, the instrument(s). The proposal is approximately 50-70 pages in length, with a minimum length of 30 pages for the literature review (Chapter Two).

Although the proposal is normally lengthened as it is transformed into the first three chapters of the full dissertation, it may not change drastically once it is completed and approved by the chair, committee, and research director. A major change in topic and/or design will require the submission of a Dissertation Modification Form. Please contact [SOEDocPrograms@liberty.edu](mailto:SOEDocPrograms@liberty.edu) to request the form. Changes to the dissertation proposal will require a director review and may warrant the need for a candidate to complete additional coursework or retake courses at the discretion of either the Director of Quantitative, Qualitative, or Applied Doctoral Research.

## **6.2 Proposal Review: Milestone One**

The chair always reviews the proposal manuscript first. When the chair is satisfied with the proposal and has given approval, the chair disseminates the proposal manuscript to the committee member for feedback. The chair and committee member reviews may take up to two weeks each. If the candidate believes the review has not been returned in a timely manner, it is his or her responsibility to contact the committee chair or reach out to [SOEDocPrograms@liberty.edu](mailto:SOEDocPrograms@liberty.edu) for assistance. Whichever member of the committee is serving as the methodologist will provide feedback on the manuscript, with a specific focus on the proposed research methods. Once the committee is satisfied with the proposal, the chair will send it to [SOEDocReview@liberty.edu](mailto:SOEDocReview@liberty.edu) for a review by either the Director of Quantitative, Qualitative, or Applied Doctoral Research. A

director review can take up to two weeks. *No proposal defense can take place without approval from either the Director of Quantitative, Qualitative, or Applied Doctoral Research.*

The candidate should expect that the proposal manuscript will go through multiple revisions before a proposal is approved for a proposal defense. Candidates should contact [SOEDocPrograms@liberty.edu](mailto:SOEDocPrograms@liberty.edu) if two weeks is exceeded or the committee chair becomes unresponsive. The committee chair should contact [SOEDocPrograms@liberty.edu](mailto:SOEDocPrograms@liberty.edu) if the committee member is not responsive. Once the chair and the committee member decide the candidate is ready for a proposal defense and the proposal has passed the director review, the candidate may move forward with scheduling a proposal defense.

### **6.3 The Proposal Defense**

Once the candidate incorporates and addresses all feedback from the chair, committee member, and director, the candidate discusses with the chair his or her readiness for the proposal defense and schedules a time for the defense. The formal proposal defense normally takes place via the university's e-conferencing system (Microsoft Teams). The candidate is responsible for identifying dates and times convenient for the chair and committee member. The chair is responsible for facilitating the proposal defense via Teams ([instructions for setting up a Teams meeting](#) are provided in the SOE Doctoral Community in Canvas).

### **6.4 Defend the Proposal: Milestone Two**

The formal dissertation proposal defense is normally about 60 minutes in length. After prayer and preliminary remarks by the chair, the candidate presents the proposal. The proposal needs to include the following: a description of the study's purpose and significance, the research question(s) and hypothesis(es) (if quantitative), and the methods (including the plans for the research design and analysis). The following procedures are recommended for the

formal proposal defense:

- Introductions and welcome
- Opening prayer by chair
- 10-15 minute presentation of PowerPoint by candidate
- Questions and comments from committee
- Dismissal of candidate for committee deliberation
- Chair will contact the candidate with the committee decision and any required revisions
- Chair will notify the SOE at [SOEDocReview@liberty.edu](mailto:SOEDocReview@liberty.edu) of the outcome of the proposal defense within 24 hours

A maximum of two proposals may be defended. Failure to successfully defend within two successive proposal defenses could result in removal from the program or remediation (e.g., enrollment in additional coursework) before progression in the dissertation process. This decision is made by the Administrative Chair of Doctoral Programs and Research in consultation with the Director of Quantitative, Qualitative, or Applied Doctoral Research. Within 24 hours of a successful proposal defense, the dissertation chair must send the Proposal Defense Decision Form to [SOEDocReview@liberty.edu](mailto:SOEDocReview@liberty.edu) to inform the Doctoral Support Team when the candidate has successfully defended his or her proposal (see the SOE Doctoral Community for the [Defense Decision Form](#)). Failure to do so could result in the candidate being removed from the program.

## **7. IRB**

### **7.1 Submit IRB Application(s)**

After completion of a successful proposal defense, IRB review and approval is needed before any participants may be recruited or data may be collected. The IRB is a federally

mandated body established to ensure ethical treatment of human subjects. Within 10 business days of the approved proposal defense, the candidate must submit his or her IRB application. The candidate and the chair must follow all directions on the [IRB website](#) and submit the IRB application through Cayuse. The chair MUST be copied on any email communication with the IRB.

Candidates must submit documentation of institutional permission from each research site to the IRB prior to receiving IRB approval. If study procedures involve schools or school districts, permission should come in the form of a letter or email, but if study procedures involve colleges or universities, IRB approval from those institutions will need to be obtained as directed by the specific institution's IRB. Permission from the research site may be sought prior to submitting the LU IRB application, but candidates must not begin recruiting participants until after receiving full IRB approval. If a candidate is unable to gain permission from the research site prior to submitting an application for IRB approval, LU IRB will review the rest of the application and issue a conditional approval letter to assist in obtaining needed site permission. Then once the candidate provides the applicable site permission documentation to the LU IRB, the IRB will change the conditional approval to a full approval, and the candidate may begin his or her research.

If the study includes faculty, students, or staff from *a single* department or group within LU, the candidate must obtain permission from the appropriate supervisor (e.g., Dean, Department Chair, Coach) and submit a signed letter or date/time stamped email to LU's IRB to verify approval to use students from that department or group. The candidate may submit the application without having obtained this permission; however, the IRB will not approve the study until proof of permission has been received. For studies that will include *only* SOE students,

please contact [SOEDocPrograms@liberty.edu](mailto:SOEDocPrograms@liberty.edu) to request the Use of SOE Students in Research Form. If the study includes faculty, students, or staff from *multiple* departments or groups within LU (e.g., all sophomores, LUO), the IRB will seek administrative approval on the candidate's behalf. Candidates should NOT contact the Provost's office directly.

Liberty University researchers planning to conduct survey research limited to LU students, faculty, and/or staff are required to use Qualtrics. Qualtrics is Liberty University's approved web-based survey software tool. It allows the user to construct and distribute complex surveys and provide statistical reports based on the results. For studies that will involve survey research with LU students, faculty, and or/staff, please contact [SOEDocPrograms@liberty.edu](mailto:SOEDocPrograms@liberty.edu) for information about Qualtrics.

## **7.2 Receive IRB Approval: Milestone Three**

Although most IRB applications for educational research do not require full reviews, the IRB will make that decision. Candidates should refer to approval timeframes on the LU IRB website. Modifications to the application should be expected. Candidates should take care to thoroughly review the LU IRB website and incorporate all of the methodologist's feedback to avoid delays.

Execution of research **CANNOT** begin prior to receiving IRB approval. If data are collected or accessed prior to obtaining all necessary and full IRB approvals, the candidate will be removed from the program.

## **8. The Dissertation**

### **8.1 Execute the Research and Develop Dissertation Manuscript**

After IRB approval is given and all necessary consents (adults) and/or assents (minors) are given from participants, the candidate executes his or her research, including data collection

and analysis. Each candidate should note that depending on his or her level of comfort, ability, and competence with the chosen quantitative, qualitative analysis, or applied research, he or she may seek an outside consultant. However, the candidate is held responsible to know, to understand, and to answer for ethical behavior, procedures, accuracy, interpretation, and integrity of the research design and analysis.

Under the guidance of the committee chair, the candidate refines Chapters One through Three and writes Chapters Four and Five. The committee chair may advise the candidate to seek guidance from the committee member (if applicable) on specific aspects or may require that the candidate seek an outside editor. The Quantitative, Qualitative, and Applied Dissertation Templates are provided in the SOE Doctoral Community.

## **8.2 Dissertation Review: Milestone Four**

The chair always reviews the dissertation manuscript first. When the chair is satisfied with the dissertation and has given approval, the chair disseminates the manuscript to the committee member for feedback. Committee member reviews can take up to two weeks. Whichever member of the committee is serving as the methodologist will provide feedback on the manuscript, with a specific focus on the research methods. Once the committee is satisfied with the dissertation, the chair will send it to [SOEDocReview@liberty.edu](mailto:SOEDocReview@liberty.edu) for a review by either the Director of Quantitative, Qualitative, or Applied Doctoral Research. A director review can take up to two weeks. *No dissertation defense can take place without the approval of either the Director of Quantitative, Qualitative, or Applied Doctoral Research.*

## **8.3 Submit the Dissertation Manuscript for a Professional Edit**

The final defense cannot be scheduled until the chair, committee member, and director have reviewed the dissertation, and each granted approval for a final defense. During

the final revision process, a professional edit of the manuscript is required. The professional edit can be performed prior to or after the defense at the discretion of the dissertation chair and/or committee member based on the quality of the manuscript. This requirement may include a full edit or may simply be an APA edit. Candidates may use any professional editor.

#### **8.4 Schedule a Dissertation Defense (Register for EDUC/EDDR 990)**

Ultimately, the chair and committee member, with approval from either the Director of Quantitative, Qualitative, or Applied Doctoral Research, decide when the manuscript is approved for defense. In the rare instance where the chair and committee member may disagree about the candidate's readiness for the defense, the Director of Quantitative, Qualitative, or Applied Doctoral Research may make the final decision.

Once the dissertation manuscript is approved by the committee and director, the candidate and chair will schedule a time for the defense. The candidate is responsible for identifying dates and times convenient for the committee and for providing a list of dates and times to the chair. The defense date must be scheduled, and the defense successfully completed at least four weeks prior to the last day of the semester term (deadlines for each semester are noted in the [SOE Doctoral Community](#) in Canvas). Prior to the defense, the candidate should submit the dissertation manuscript to Turnitin in EDUC/EDDR 989. The chair should review the Turnitin report to ensure it is acceptable.

The chair is responsible for informing each committee member of the date, time, and procedures of the defense. The chair is also responsible for scheduling and facilitating the Teams meeting for the defense ([instructions for setting up a Teams meeting](#) are provided in the SOE Doctoral Community in Canvas).

Candidates will defend their dissertation while enrolled in EDUC/EDDR 989. The Doctoral Support Team will request that EDUC/EDDR 990 be added to the candidate's schedule once he or she has successfully defended and is ready to submit the approved manuscript to the library for publication. **Please note that a candidate may not enroll in EDUC/EDDR 990 without a successful dissertation defense.**

### **8.5 Pre-defense**

One to two weeks prior to the defense, the chair may schedule and conduct a pre-defense phone call or e-conferencing session to finalize the defense details and complete a practice defense. The pre-defense is a good opportunity to make sure Teams works well for the candidate and committee members before the final defense date. At the chair's discretion, the pre-defense conference may include only the chair and candidate.

### **8.6 Preparing for the Defense**

The candidate is responsible for emailing the final copy of the dissertation manuscript to the committee approximately two weeks prior to the dissertation defense. The candidate prepares a 15-20 minute presentation of his or her dissertation for the defense; a visual presentation (e.g., PowerPoint) is required. The presentation should be sent to the committee at least one week prior to the defense. Candidates are required to use a webcam, have reliable internet and phone connections, be in professional dress, be in a professional location, and have technological support on hand, if needed, to ensure the defense runs smoothly. Teams must be used for distance defenses, and the chair is responsible for setting up the Teams meeting ([instructions for setting up a Teams meeting](#) are provided in the SOE Doctoral Community in Canvas). Only the candidate is required to share video through Teams during the defense.

## 8.7 Defend the Dissertation: Milestone Five

The dissertation defense takes approximately one hour to complete. The only people who should attend a defense are the candidate, the dissertation committee, LU faculty members, and SOE doctoral students. The following procedures are recommended:

- Introductions and welcome
- Opening prayer by chair and introduction of the committee and candidate
- 15-20 minute presentation by candidate
- Questions and comments from the committee
- Questions and comments from the SOE Faculty
- Dismissal of candidate for committee deliberation
- Re-connection with candidate for decision and discussion of revisions, as applicable
- Final remarks

After prayer and preliminary remarks by the chair, the candidate gives the defense presentation. The presentation needs to include the following: an overview of the study's purpose and significance (both practical and empirical), the methods, the analysis, the results, limitations, discussion of the findings, and suggestions for future research. The presentation should be used as an aid. Reading from the presentation or script is not acceptable and may result in an unsuccessful defense. Following the defense presentation, the committee members will ask questions. Following questions and discussion, all individuals not on the committee, including the candidate, will disconnect to provide the committee the opportunity to discuss the defense. Using the Dissertation Defense Decision Form for guidance, the committee will make a decision (see Appendix B for Dissertation Defense Decision Form and related rubrics). The candidate is invited to reconnect, and the chair will inform the candidate of the outcome.

The committee makes one of the following decisions:

- Approved with no revisions or minor revisions
- Provisionally approved with major revisions
- Not approved with recommendation to revise dissertation or write a new dissertation

If the committee makes one of the first two decisions, the chair delineates the required steps and specifies a timeline for completion (usually 7-15 days). It should be noted that, at the discretion of the chair and dependent upon the number of revisions that need to be made, the chair may require that the candidate have his or her manuscript professionally edited again.

A maximum of two dissertation defenses may be completed. Failure to defend successfully within two defenses will result in removal from the program. Within 24 hours of the defense, the chair should send the [Defense Decision Form](#) to [SOEDocReview@liberty.edu](mailto:SOEDocReview@liberty.edu) so that the Doctoral Support Team can post the final grade in EDUC/EDDR 990.

## **9. Publication and Graduation**

Upon approval from the chair, the candidate follows the Jerry Falwell Library (JFL) submission guidelines for publication. These guidelines must be strictly followed and can be accessed at the following webpage: [Theses and Dissertation Publishing Guidelines](#). Candidates should note that the final grade for EDUC/EDDR 990 cannot be posted without publishing the dissertation with the JFL.

As a reminder, the candidate must complete requirements and paperwork necessary for graduation and should plan to attend the hooding ceremony and graduation exercises in May. Graduation information can be found on the [Registrar's website](#). Application for graduation should be completed no later than the beginning of the term in which the candidate intends to defend the dissertation.

## **Appendix A: Dissertation Committee Qualifications and Responsibilities**

### **The Chair**

#### **Qualifications**

- Full time or adjunct LU faculty member Approved chair can be found in the Chair/Committee Member search section of the [SOE Doctoral Community](#) in Canvas.
- Must hold an earned doctorate degree from a regionally accredited university with a completed dissertation. This normally means a Ph.D. or Ed.D. in an education-related field.

#### **Responsibilities**

- Provides guidance to doctoral candidates, directing them through the dissertation process as outlined in the Dissertation Handbook, from the development of the proposal to the final publishing of the dissertation. The chair will provide timely and thorough feedback. All feedback on manuscripts, unless otherwise communicated to the candidate, should be returned within a two-week timeframe.
- Provides feedback on the doctoral candidate's skills and may require candidates to seek additional support as needed.
- Ensures that the proposal and the dissertation manuscript comply with all university criteria and are acceptable scholarly works, including conformity to content, structure, format, style, and ethical guidelines.
- Ensures frequent communication with candidate and consultation with committee member.
- Communicates with the committee member frequently and welcomes his or her suggestions for the candidate's manuscript.
- Uses all dissertation technologies as outlined in the Dissertation Handbook. Completes

Canvas course responsibilities as outlined in the dissertation handbook.

- Completes necessary forms and rubrics as outlined in the dissertation handbook.
- Makes proposal and dissertation defense arrangements.
- If the chair is the methodologist on the committee, he or she will also be directly responsible for ensuring that the highest standards are met regarding research methods, design, procedures, and analysis (primarily Chapters Three and Four of the dissertation).

### **Committee Member**

#### **Qualifications**

- Approved School of Education *committee member* found in the Chair/Committee Member search section of the SOE Doctoral Community.
- Must hold an earned doctorate degree from a regionally accredited university. This normally means a Ph.D. or Ed.D. in an education-related field.

#### **Responsibilities**

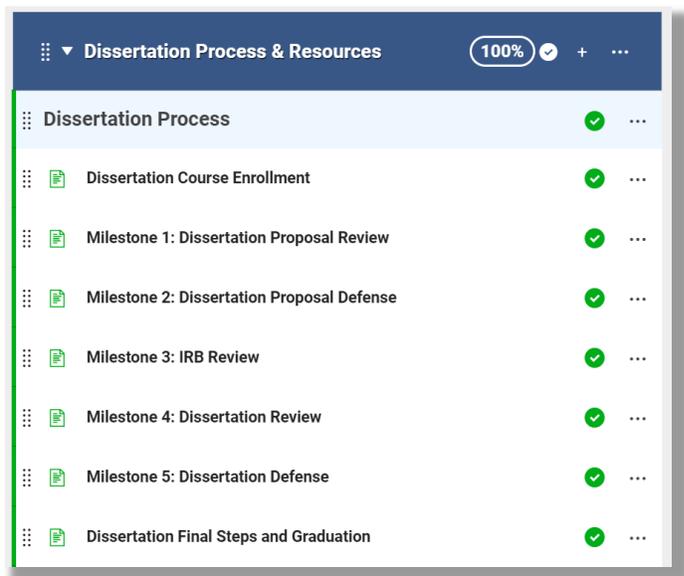
- Provides mentorship to the doctoral candidate through the dissertation process as outlined in the Dissertation Handbook, from the development of the prospectus to the final publishing of the dissertation. The committee member will provide timely and thorough feedback.
- Works collaboratively with the committee chair to guide the candidate in the dissertation process. All feedback on manuscripts, unless otherwise communicated to the candidate, should be provided within a two-week timeframe.
- If the committee member is the methodologist on the committee, he or she is also directly responsible for ensuring the highest standards are met regarding research methods, design, procedures, and analysis (primarily Chapters Three and Four of the dissertation).

### Appendix B: Approved Quantitative Designs and Data Analysis

| Quantitative Designs   | Data Analysis   |
|--|---|
| Correlation/Predictive correlational   | Pearson's correlation<br>Bivariate regression<br>Multiple regression<br>Logistic regression |
| Causal-comparative<br>True Experimental<br>Quasi-experimental Nonequivalent<br>Control-Group (Pre-Test-Posttest<br>Design)<br>Quasi-experimental Static-group<br>(Posttest Only) | $t$ test<br>One-way ANOVA<br>Two-way ANOVA<br>ANCOVA<br>MANOVA                              |

## Appendix C: Dissertation Approval Process

**Note:** The information for this appendix can be found in the [SOE Doctoral Community](#) in Canvas.



## Appendix D: Quantitative Dissertation Template

**Note:** This appendix has been moved to the [SOE Doctoral Community](#) in Canvas.

## Appendix E: Qualitative Dissertation Template

**Note:** This appendix has been moved to the [SOE Doctoral Community](#) in Canvas.

## Appendix F: Applied Dissertation Template

**Note:** This appendix has been moved to the [SOE Doctoral Community](#) in Canvas.