

Basic Dissertation and MAP Guidelines

There are two dissertation formats available in the College of Social Work: the traditional (book) format and the Multiple Article Path (MAP). The candidate and the supervisory committee chair should discuss which format works best with the candidate's research question and their individual preferences and strengths. Students should check with the PhD Program Coordinator prior to beginning the dissertation process for the most recent guidelines.

In general accord with the following description of a dissertation (traditional or MAP), adapted from the Purdue website, we offer these edited guidelines to guide and support the development of your work (<https://www.cs.purdue.edu/homes/dec/essay.dissertation.html>):

1. A thesis is a hypothesis, proposition, or line of argument.
2. A PhD dissertation is a formal document that argues in defense of a particular thesis or line of argument.
3. A dissertation should be "original" and "substantial." The research performed to support a thesis must be both, and the dissertation must show it to be so. In particular, a dissertation highlights original contributions with implications for social work practice, education and research.
4. The essence of a dissertation is critical thinking. Analysis and concepts form the heart of the work.
5. A dissertation concentrates on principles: it states the lessons learned, not merely describing the facts behind them.
6. In general, every statement in a dissertation must be supported either by a reference to published scientific literature or by original work. Moreover, a dissertation does not repeat the details of critical thinking and analysis found in published sources; it uses the results as fact and refers the reader to the source for further details.
7. Each sentence in a dissertation must be complete and correct in a grammatical sense. The writing in a dissertation must be succinct and crystal clear. Shades of meaning matter; the terminology and prose must make fine distinctions. The words must convey exactly the meaning intended, nothing more and nothing less.
8. As in any good professional paper, each statement in a dissertation must be correct and defensible in a logical and scientific sense. Moreover, the discussions in a dissertation must satisfy the most stringent rules of logic applied to mathematics and science.

I. Traditional (or Book) Dissertation Format:

The College of Social Work acknowledges the individual preferences and strengths of its doctoral students, as well as variations in research activities and projects. The traditional, or book style, dissertation format offers one approach for students who are preparing for academic, as well as other, careers. Under this model, a student writes a five (or more) chapter, book-style, dissertation that may lend itself to being published as a book manuscript and/or as articles for publication in peer-reviewed journals. Using this format, students are able to:

- Receive mentoring in the research process and prepare their first professional publications.
- Be more competitive for academic/faculty positions upon graduation.
- Add to the professional knowledge base.

Students seeking to pursue the traditional format should consult with the Ph.D. Director as well as their dissertation chairs to discuss feasibility of this option. When choosing a committee, a student, in consultation with their committee Chair, should consider faculty members who have strong publishing histories.

II. Organization of the traditional dissertation:

The traditional format for a dissertation generally has the following basic outline although the number of chapters and outline may vary:

Chapter 1

Problem Statement, which includes:

- a. A definition or statement of the problem.
- b. The importance of the problem, i.e. a critical review of the extant literature to justify the proposed/prospective research and why it matters to the field of social work.
- c. The theoretical foundation(s) supporting the problem/issue.
- d. The research questions.
- e. A succinct discussion of the methods/methodology(ies) to be used to answer those questions.

Chapter 2

Literature Review and Theory: This chapter offers a critical examination of the salient literature on the topic of the dissertation, including a review of theories, methods and findings, ending with identification of the research questions to be studied in the dissertation.

Chapter 3

Methods/Methodology: This chapter addresses how the study will be implemented, including, but not limited to, data collection and sources, instruments and protocols, sample (size, recruitment, etc.), tools of analysis, IRB approval, etc.

Chapter 4

Findings: The results of the study are presented in detail, addressing in particular the research questions posed by the study.

Chapter 5

Discussion: Includes a discussion of implications and recommendations, with attention to contributions to social work education, research and practice.

III. Traditional (Book) Dissertation Proposal and Defense Procedures

The proposal defense is done orally, before an approved thesis supervisory committee *no sooner than two months after the successful completion of the Qualifying Exam*. The complete dissertation is orally defended *no sooner than four months after the oral defense of the proposal*.

1. Dissertations prepared using the traditional format will be subject to proposal and dissertation defense procedures as specified by program and Graduate School policy. The student is the sole author of the dissertation.
2. The traditional dissertation proposal must include:
 - a. Chapters 1, 2 and 3 as described above.
 - b. A timeline for completion of the work.

3. For the dissertation defense, students will present a final document that includes all the elements required by the University Thesis Office for a traditional dissertation (e.g., abstract, table of contents, appendices), along with the completed versions of Chapters 15. Note that the dissertation defense occurs after the Chair and committee members have approved the student to go forward to final defense.
4. The chair should receive a final, revised draft of the dissertation proposal or completed dissertation **at least three weeks before the oral presentation** and the rest of the committee and the Ph.D. Director should receive a copy **at least two weeks in advance** of the oral presentation. *This review copy is a fully revised and polished version of the proposal or dissertation, having been vetted previously by the committee members.*

IV. Guidelines for Multiple Article Path (MAP) Dissertation

1. The College of Social Work acknowledges the individual preferences and strengths of its doctoral students. To recognize such strengths, the Ph.D. Committee has developed an alternative format for the dissertation known as the “Multiple Article Path,” or MAP. The MAP offers an alternative for students who are preparing for academic careers. Under this model, a student writes a minimum of 3 articles for publication in peerreviewed journals. There are several advantages to qualified students who choose this option. Students are able to:
 - Receive mentoring as they prepare their first professional publications.
 - Be more competitive for academic/faculty positions upon graduation.
 - Add to the professional knowledge base.
2. Students seeking to pursue the MAP format should consult with the Ph.D. Director as well as their dissertation chairs to discuss feasibility of this option. ***All MAP dissertations require prior approval of the dissertation committee and Ph.D. Program Director at the time of composing the supervisory committee.*** When choosing a committee, a student, in consultation with their committee Chair, should consider faculty members who have strong publishing histories.

V. Organization of the MAP Dissertation

1. The dissertation must include an abstract that synthesizes the articles, as well as an introduction (Chapter 1) and a conclusion (Chapter 5, assuming the minimum of 3 articles is presented).
2. The introduction (Ch.1) addresses the research underlying all three articles, and should include:
 - a. A definition or statement of the problem.
 - b. The importance of the problem, i.e. a critical review of the extant literature to justify the proposed/prospective research and why it matters to the field of social work.
 - c. The theoretical foundation(s) supporting the problem/issue.
 - d. The research questions.
 - e. A succinct discussion of the methods/methodology(ies) to be used to answer those questions.
3. The conclusion (final chapter) will briefly summarize the dissertation’s major findings, discussion, and develop recommendations and social work implications for education, practice and research. The student will also present and discuss linkages (i.e., similarities and

differences) between the separate manuscripts that are included in the dissertation, striving as much as possible to present the document as representative of a coherent body of work.

4. The dissertation will be formatted and bound consistent with University Thesis Office guidelines (see *A Handbook for Theses and Dissertations*, available on-line from the Graduate School at www.gradschool.utah.edu).

VI. MAP Dissertation Proposal and Defense Procedures

1. Dissertations prepared using the MAP format will be subject to proposal and dissertation defense procedures as specified by program and Graduate School policy. **The proposal defense is done orally, before an approved thesis supervisory committee no sooner than two months after the successful completion of the Qualifying Exam. The complete dissertation is orally defended no sooner than four months after the oral defense of the proposal.**
2. The MAP dissertation proposal must include:
 - a. The introductory chapter (see #2 above).
 - b. An outline of the proposed research and how it will contribute to each article.
 - c. A timeline detailing tasks to be completed for each article.
 - d. A list of proposed journals for each article.
 - e. A timeline for completion of the work.
3. For the dissertation defense, students will present a final document that includes all the elements required by the University Thesis Office for a traditional dissertation (e.g., abstract, table of contents, appendices); their introductory chapter; all completed articles (minimum of 3) that will be submitted for publication; and a concluding chapter. Note that the dissertation defense occurs after the Chair and committee members have approved the student to go forward to final defense.
4. The chair should receive a final, revised draft of the dissertation proposal or completed dissertation at least three weeks before the oral presentation and the rest of the committee and the Ph.D. Director should receive a copy at least two weeks in advance of the oral presentation. *This review copy is a fully revised and polished version of the proposal or dissertation, having been vetted previously by the committee members.*

VII. Number and Nature of Articles

1. The student will write a **minimum** of 3 articles under the MAP format. Each article is treated as a separate chapter, i.e., they will comprise Chapters 2, 3, and 4 of the dissertation
2. The articles should form a cohesive body of work that supports a theme or themes that are expressed clearly in the introduction to the dissertation (Chapter 1). All articles for the MAP dissertation must be empirically-based analyses using quantitative, qualitative, or systematically collected data. The first article may utilize existing literature and available data to **a)** perform a systematic review/meta-analysis or **b)** develop a conceptual model, in which the concepts are

nominally/operationally linked together in feasible, testable hypotheses or propositions, to be subsequently explored and analyzed in the remaining two papers.

3. Articles are submitted to journals following the style requirements of those particular journals. However, in the dissertation, the articles *must* follow University Thesis Office guidelines in terms of formatting and presentation (see MAP Appendix A).

VIII. Journals

1. A provisional list of journals must be approved by the dissertation committee at the time of the proposal. Serving as an “editorial board” for the student, the committee will help select journals that will challenge the student and offer a reasonable chance of publication success. The dissertation committee will approve the final selection of journals at the time of the thesis defense, prior to submission of any work.
2. All articles must be ready for submission prior to the dissertation defense and should be submitted as soon as possible following the defense, once any changes suggested by the committee at the defense are made and the dissertation has been passed by the committee and approved by the Dean of the College of Social Work.

IX. Authorship

1. Students must be the sole author on two of the three articles in the completed MAP dissertation. One article may be co-authored, with the student as the lead author. Coauthors must be identified at the student’s proposal defense and any changes in coauthorship must be approved by the student’s supervisory committee.
2. Co-authorship must follow authorship guidelines as outlined in the Ph.D. Handbook. Please see Appendix A, below.
3. To avoid conflicts of interest, any co-authors who are members of the student’s supervisory committee must recuse themselves from judging articles carrying their name and *must notify the Ph.D. Director at least one month prior to the dissertation defense*. In these cases, the Ph.D. Director, in consultation with the remainder of the committee members, will appoint additional faculty members prior to the defense to determine the suitability of the article in question.

DISSERTATION GUIDELINES – APPENDIX A

Authorship and Collaborative Research (from the Ph.D. Handbook)

As part of their doctoral preparation, all Ph.D. students should engage in research and scholarship in collaboration with their peers and/or College faculty. This process should be based on the principles of mutual respect, critical inquiry, and collaboration. The following guidelines apply:

- 1) Early in their work with students, faculty members have a responsibility to discuss and agree upon each contributor's responsibilities and authorship expectations, including order of authorship. Faculty have a special responsibility to help students contribute as much as they are able.
- 2) As soon as possible in any research or writing collaboration those involved should come to an agreement regarding data ownership.
- 3) All contributors making a substantial contribution to articles should be listed as authors.
- 4) Order of authorship generally should reflect extent of contribution, except that the level of contribution required for students to be listed as authors may be less than that required of faculty. When individuals' contributions are approximately equal, preference in order of authorship should be given to students.
- 5) Faculty have the responsibility to assure that students' dissertations represent original, independent work. Articles that students prepare based on their dissertation findings would be expected to list the student as first or sole author.