



The University of Vermont
COLLEGE OF NURSING
AND HEALTH SCIENCES

DOCTORAL PROGRAM OF STUDY
IN HUMAN FUNCTIONING AND REHABILITATION SCIENCES

DISSERTATION CONCEPT PAPER PROTOCOL

The student must do a “three-paper” dissertation as outlined in the table below.

Three-Paper Dissertation
Ch 1. Introduction Ch 2. Paper one Ch 3. Paper two Ch 4. Paper three Ch 5. Integrative Discussion

The purpose of the concept paper is to lay out the basic concepts and methods for the dissertation research for review, discussion, and tentative approval of the student’s dissertation committee. The meeting to discuss these comments is informal and interactive. The outcome of the meeting is approval of the concept paper or requests for modifications prior to approval. Both qualitative and quantitative methods are valued in this program and can be used for dissertation research, pending approval of the student’s dissertation committee.

FORMAT

The student should describe similar concepts for each of the three component papers in a concise form. Concept papers are approximately 5-10 pages in length.

Statement of the Problem

The statement of the problem is a rational and reasoned argument that posits the problem and indicates the necessity for the research. This should be supported by a literature review of critical studies that provide sufficient information to identify the "gap" in the current research that will be addressed by the proposed study. This will set the stage for how your research will contribute to attempts to address the problem. This section also will incorporate definitions of key concepts.

Significance of the Research

Significance should be established by presenting an integrative review of key sources that establish the need for the study or studies. The far-reaching implications of the project findings

should be addressed as well. This should include a brief review of the literature with relevant citations and may also include an outline of additional topics to be included in the review of the literature conducted while in the dissertation phase for the main study or collection of studies.

Research Question(s)

The research questions should be presented and show how the methods will be designed to answer those questions. Bear in mind that any questions should be answerable within the timeline and framework of dissertation research. Consider the nature of the data that will be gathered and analysis techniques that will be used to answer each question or set of questions. One way to do this is by providing a table that will show the independent and dependent variables and analysis tools that will be used for each study.

Method(s)

The methods description(s) should include data sources, instruments, procedures, and analysis methods to be used in each study. It will be important to gather the committee's input and tentative approval of the methods, which the student will tighten and elaborate for the formal proposal.

Concept Paper Approval

The concept paper must be discussed in a face-to-face meeting with the student's approved dissertation committee. Distance technology may be used as needed. Concept Paper approval must be obtained from all committee members before preparing the dissertation proposal for formal defense.



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Dissertation Concept Paper Approval Form

WORKING TITLE:

STUDENT'S NAME:

The committee agrees with the concepts put forward in this paper and that the student is ready to prepare a dissertation proposal based on these concepts. The committee recommends this student be allowed to register for dissertation credit. The full proposal still must be presented in a formal meeting with the committee for approval. Only at that point can the student apply for Doctoral Candidate status.

Signed

Committee Chair _____ Date _____

Committee member 1 _____ Date _____

Committee member 2 _____ Date _____

Committee member 3 _____ Date _____

Committee member 4 _____ Date _____



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Dissertation Format

Students are required by the Graduate College to use a computer software program appropriate to the discipline to create the Table of Contents and the Lists of Tables and Figures from the dissertation text headings. (see <http://catalogue.uvm.edu/graduate/degreerequirements/requirementsforthedoctorofphilosophydegree/>)

A dissertation must be prepared and submitted in compliance with the "**Guidelines for Writing a Thesis or Dissertation**" available from the Graduate College office and the program. A formatted copy of the dissertation must be submitted to the Graduate College for a Format/Record Check at least three weeks prior to the scheduled oral defense. Each student must also provide defensible copies of the dissertation to members of the dissertation defense examination committee at least two weeks before the scheduled examination. Individual departments may require earlier deadlines.

Students must notify the Graduate College prior to defending their dissertations.

The oral defense of a dissertation can be scheduled only after successful completion of the comprehensive examination and the submission of an original copy of the dissertation to the Graduate College for a Format/Record Check.

Note: The descriptions in this section provide suggestions for formatting. The actual proposal format and content will be guided by the student's dissertation committee and will comply with the standards of the Graduate College.

Dissertation Proposal

- The proposal must be defended in a formal face-to-face meeting with the student's dissertation committee. Faculty members from outside the University may join in via conference call as needed. This proposal meeting should be scheduled for a two-hour block of time. It generally begins with a formal presentation of 20-30 minutes, followed by discussion. Alternatively, shorter presentations may be provided for each of the studies being proposed, with discussions following each component study presentation.
- After a successful defense, the student will have earned doctoral candidate status and permission to move forward in completing the proposed research.

Dissertation Completion

- A three paper structure is required for the HFRS Doctoral Program. The research may be conducted using quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods.
- The standard structure for a three paper (still in 5 chapters) dissertation is:
 - Chapter I = Introductory Chapter
 - Chapter II = Paper 1
 - Chapter III = Paper 2
 - Chapter IV = Paper 3
 - Chapter V = Integrative Discussion
- The student and dissertation chair will decide how to engage members of the dissertation committee during the process of completing the research and writing the required papers. Any major variations in methodology approved as part of the proposal should be presented to the committee for approval if they arise.
- Students often present drafted chapters to the chair of their dissertation committee first and then to the whole committee when approved for submission by the chair. As a general guideline the committee should be given two weeks for reviewing each submission (unless a different timeframe has received agreement by the committee).
- When the candidate, chair, and committee agree that the document is ready, the candidate may schedule the dissertation defense. The two-hour defense must be formally scheduled with the Graduate College at least 3 weeks prior to the scheduled defense date.
- At this point, the candidate should provide a completely compiled dissertation to members of the dissertation committee, allowing approximately 2 weeks for the committee to review the final version of dissertation prior to meeting.
- In most cases, a dissertation defense begins with a public presentation of approximately 30-35 min, followed by a period of 25-30 min for questions from the audience. At this point, the committee chair excuses other guests and the committee meets with the candidate for 45-90 minutes to discuss any further changes needed in the dissertation and to ask questions of the candidate about any aspects of the work. At the conclusion, the candidate is excused while the committee deliberates approval of the defense and the document. Most candidates are asked to make some changes before submitting the document to the Graduate College. It is wise to arrange for a professional formatter to assist with the final preparation of the manuscript prior to submission to the Graduate College. Requirements and forms for submission can be found at <http://catalogue.uvm.edu/graduate/degreerequirements/requirementsforthedoctorofphilosophydegree/>

Dissertation Defense Examination Committee

Upon receipt of a completed dissertation, the Dean of the Graduate College will appoint a dissertation defense examination committee based upon nominations submitted by the candidate's advisor. The dissertation defense examination committee consists of a minimum of four University of Vermont faculty members, all regular members of the graduate faculty. At least two graduate faculty members must be from inside the department or program. The chair must be both a member of the graduate faculty and from outside the candidate's department and program. The definition of outside faculty means the faculty member has no appointment of any

kind in the department or program. For University-wide interdisciplinary programs, the chair must be outside the department of the candidate's advisor. The chair will be designated by the Graduate College dean upon nomination by the dissertation advisor. Individual programs may require more than four committee members or have other specific membership requirements. The dissertation defense examination committee and the graduate studies committee do not have to be the same.

The chair of the dissertation defense examination committee has the responsibility for ensuring proper conduct of the examination, appropriate documentation of the results, and that the signatures of endorsement are added to the acceptance page of the dissertation following a successful defense.

The acceptability of the dissertation is determined by the dissertation defense examination committee. The chair of the dissertation defense examination committee notifies the Graduate College of the outcome. A grade of "S" or "U" is awarded. If a student's defense examination performance is not satisfactory, then one reexamination, and one only, is permitted.

After a successful dissertation defense, candidates must electronically upload the corrected dissertation to <http://www.etsadmin.com/uvm> for approval by the Graduate College within the time period specified by the dissertation defense examination committee, and/or the Graduate College.