

Section 1: Principles and Procedures

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Note: Before reading on, note that ALL forms and templates related to the dissertation can be found on the GSAPP website, via these steps:

1. Go to: <http://gsappweb.rutgers.edu>
2. Click “Current Students” under the “Students” tab.
3. Click “Dissertation Material” in the left-hand column.

Administrative and Procedural Deadlines:

	Abstract/ Announce- ments	Latest Defense Date	Submit Final Revised Dissertation to Sylvia	Diploma Application	Graduation Date
June 1	Sept 1	Sept 15	Oct 1	Oct 1	October
Sept 1	Dec 1	Dec 15	Jan 2	Jan 4	January
Jan 1	April 1	April 15	May 1	**March 15**	May

A file review should be initiated with Sylvia either before a dissertation defense is scheduled or before applying for internship, whichever comes first.

INTRODUCTION AND GETTING STARTED

Students often underestimate the time required to complete a dissertation. The process usually requires at least two years from the initial exploration of an idea to its successful completion. The following guidelines are intended to assist GSAPP students in the planning and completion of the dissertation:

1. The first step for all students should be taking the online course and exam provided by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). This course is called the Human Subjects Certification Program of the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs. The course and exam require about four hours. Students are advised to complete this course as early as possible during their years at GSAPP.
2. From their first year in the program, many students find it helpful to begin talking to professors and other students about possible topics and ideas. Papers for courses as well as practicum experiences provide important opportunities to explore areas of interest. For some students, the dissertation is an opportunity to develop a career direction (see Dissertation FAQ for more information).
3. **Choosing a chair:** Before committing to a dissertation topic, students should choose a Dissertation Chairperson (See Policy on Dissertation Chair & Committee, p. 3).
 - a) Students should speak with several faculty members about the faculty members' research ideas and interests, ongoing projects, and available data. Some of the best dissertations have resulted from a student joining a professor's research team.
 - b) Dissertation abstracts are filed in the Coordinator of Student Services office. Students can use these abstracts to identify dissertations of interest and then go to the RUCore website to review a particular dissertation. <https://rucore.libraries.rutgers.edu/etd/>
 - c) In their second year, students may take one of the Dissertation courses. They may also explore quantitative methodologies in their statistics courses, qualitative and pragmatic case designs in Dan Fishman's courses and program evaluation in Anne Gregory's course. Theoretical dissertations are another option that can be explored by Clinical students.
4. **It is most expeditious if you have a dissertation and topic and are working on your dissertation by the middle of the second semester of the second or third year.** Once a Dissertation Chair is chosen, the chair and the student should then collaborate in choosing the second member of the Dissertation Committee.

THE DISSERTATION COMMITTEE

The Professional Dissertation Committee is selected by the candidate in consultation with his/her academic advisor and must be approved by the Department Chair (Applied or Clinical). Two committee members are required. The student may opt to include a third member with special expertise at the Chair's discretion. For the Clinical Program, the two committee members must be other than those on the students' Oral Specialty Comprehensive Committee. For the Applied program, only one member must be different. It is the responsibility of the chairperson to ensure the appropriateness of the proposed methodology and its implementation either directly or through recourse to other individuals, committee members or others.

Before you begin work on your dissertation, **you must obtain official approval for your Dissertation Committee and topic.** Complete the "Dissertation Committee Approval Form" and submit the form to your Department Chair. Form available online at:
<http://gsappweb.rutgers.edu/cstudents/dissertation%20material/index.php>

POLICY ON DISSERTATION CHAIR & COMMITTEE MEMBER CREDENTIALS (9/27/10)

All dissertation committees must conform to the following rules and standards. Questions about the eligibility of any potential member should be discussed with (a) your academic advisor, (b) your Dissertation Chair (if you have already selected one), and/or (c) your Department Chair. Qualifications of potential committee members will be evaluated based on their academic and professional qualifications, as well as their appropriateness to guide and evaluate the dissertation topic.

Dissertation Chair (Required)

1. The chairperson may be any core or joint faculty member, including emeritus faculty, the director of the Center for Applied Psychology and the director of the Psychological Clinic.
2. Any visiting or non-tenured clinical faculty member who has the appropriate scholarly credentials (i.e., record of scholarly publication) and who has served on two or more dissertation committees as a second member may also serve as a chairperson of a dissertation committee.
3. If for reasons determined by a student's choice of dissertation topic and the faculty member's scholarly credentials, a faculty member outside of GSAPP or outside of Rutgers University is proposed as a chairperson, the proposed appointment must be approved by both the student's Department Chair and the GSAPP A&P committee (see below).

Second Member (Required)

1. Any core, joint, visiting, or emeritus faculty member, the director of the Center for Applied Psychology and the director of the Psychological Clinic may serve as a second member of a student's dissertation committee.
2. Any GSAPP contributing faculty member, non-GSAPP Rutgers University faculty member, or person who is a faculty member at another university may serve as a second or third dissertation committee member providing the student's Department Chair and the A&P Committee approve of the scholarly credentials (see below). The second member will demonstrate scholarly credentials reflected in publications (e.g., journal articles, books, book chapters).
3. Any person who has appropriate scholarly credentials, reflected in publications, consistent with the needs of the dissertation may serve as a second member upon approval by the dissertation committee chair, the A&P committee and the student's Department Chair (see below). In the event of a discrepancy in these decisions, the director of the student's program will have the final decision.
4. Any person who has served as a committee member on a GSAPP dissertation prior to 9/18/2010 may serve in the same capacity on future committees.

Third Member (Optional)

1. Any core, joint or visiting faculty member, the director of the Center for Applied Psychology and the director of the Psychological Clinic may serve as a third member of a student's dissertation committee.
2. Any GSAPP contributing faculty member, non-GSAPP Rutgers University faculty member, or person who is a faculty member at another university may serve as a second or third dissertation committee member providing the student's Department Chair and the A&P Committee approve of the scholarly credentials.
3. Any person with special skills that are consistent with the needs of the dissertation may serve as a third member upon approval by the dissertation committee chair and the student's Department Chair. The person need not have a history of publications, but must have a special professional skill that will contribute to the study.

Seeking A&P Approval for a committee member:

In several cases described above, the student will need to obtain approval from the Advancement and Promotion (A&P) Committee to have a person serve on a committee (e.g., if the proposed committee member is a faculty member at another university; a non-university psychologist). To initiate this process, speak to your Dissertation Chair and Department Chair to determine the committee member's appropriateness and to see if the committee

member has been previously approved to serve on GSAPP dissertations. If they have not been previously approved, the student will prepare a brief statement (couple of sentences, short paragraph) justifying the committee member's appropriateness for the committee. The student will submit that statement and the proposed committee member's C.V. to both the Student Services Coordinator and the Department Chair. The Student Services Coordinator will forward the application to the A&P Committee and will notify the student and Department Chair of the A&P's final decision.

DISSERTATION OVERVIEW

The faculty of GSAPP holds the doctoral dissertation to be a highly important component of the professional training of candidates for the Doctor of Psychology Degree. A wide range of topics and multiple strategies of inquiry are suitable for dissertations. The highest attainable level of quality is required. Beyond these general guidelines, the following policies and procedures are endorsed by the faculty:

[For all forms, go to: <http://gsappweb.rutgers.edu/cstudents/dissertation%20material/index.php>]

1. The professional dissertation is assigned a minimum of 9 credits.
2. The Dissertation Committee and tentative title must be approved by the relevant Department Chair before a Proposal meeting. (Get Committee Approval Form from program administrator.)
3. The student must register for dissertation credits for each semester she or he is working on the dissertation (which includes the proposal) and consulting with the committee chair, unless they are on internship. Three of the required 9 dissertation credits may be used for a Dissertation course, but students need to verify this with their Dissertation Chair (Students need a total of 9 credits). They only need to register for dissertation credits if they have not defended and are not registered for anything else. Three credits is a minimum # of credits they are allowed to register with the exception of the 1 time allowed to do 1 credit of dissertation).
4. A formal proposal (according to the Dissertation Chair's specifications) is required of every student.
5. In the process of writing a formal proposal, the committee may require a 10-15 page written prospectus prior to committing to a dissertation topic.
6. At least one pre-data collection meeting of the student's dissertation committee is required to discuss the proposal. Individual chairs may opt for two or more meetings. After committee members approve the proposal, a signed copy of it is given to the department assistant for the student's file.
7. Both the student and Dissertation Chair must take and pass the IRB course on the

Protection of Human Subjects. Go to: <http://orsp.rutgers.edu/Humans/hscp.php>

8. A dissertation that involves living human participants or their records requires that the student get approval from the Rutgers IRB for all research procedures before collecting data. There are three types of IRB review/status: **exempt**, **expedited**, and **full board review**.
 - a. Info on exempt: http://orsp.rutgers.edu/Humans/irb_exempt.php
 - b. Info on expedited: http://orsp.rutgers.edu/Humans/irb_expedited.php
 - c. All other approved protocols fall into Full Board Review. For complete information on applying for IRB approval, see: <http://orsp.rutgers.edu/Humans/default.php#general>
9. For further information on what kinds of research may require IRB review, go to: http://orsp.rutgers.edu/Humans/irb_notrequired.php. Remember, the student is responsible for obtaining proper IRB approval for any research (human or otherwise). Consult with your Dissertation Chair and the IRB Administrator as needed. See p. 16 for more IRB details.
10. Dissertation Credits:

All students must be registered for at least 3 credits (dissertation course or dissertation credit) each Fall and Spring semester until graduation. The faculty member with whom they are working should give them a grade (S, U, or INC) at the end of every semester during which they signed up for dissertation credit. The grade should be for the work they did with the faculty member during that semester. If an INC grade is assigned because the expected work is not done, the student should submit all needed paperwork to the faculty member as soon as the work is done so that a change of grade can be completed electronically by the faculty member. It should be noted that after students attain the required nine dissertation credits, they still need to register for 3 dissertation credits if they are not registered for any other course and/or if they have not yet defended with the exception of one time allowed of 1 credit of dissertation. Further, even if all course work, internship, and 9 credits of dissertation have already been completed, students must register for 3 credits of dissertation study for the Fall semester unless they defend their dissertation prior to October 1st, and 3 credits for the Spring semester unless they defend their dissertation prior to February 1st. In other words, if students cannot defend by October 1st in the Fall semester, they must register for credits in that semester. If students plan on defending in the Spring semester and are unable to defend by February 1st, then they must register for credits in that semester. Students who use faculty time during the summer must register for dissertation credits in the summer. Also, it is important to remember that most GSAPP faculty members are on 10-month contracts and their availability during the summer is uncertain. Students should discuss these matters in advance with their Dissertation Chairperson.

TYPES OF DISSERTATIONS

The Dissertation in Professional Psychology may be developed in a variety of ways, depending upon the student's interests and professional work. The overriding requirements are that it be of a quality comparable to that of other dissertations in this University and related to the science or practice of psychology. The major types of dissertations described within this section are grouped into two broad categories, based on their acceptability or appropriateness within either the Clinical or Applied programs: (a) Clinical and Applied program, and (b) Clinical only. All types of dissertations included under Clinical and Applied programs are approved for students in both programs. Those listed under the Clinical only category have been approved for Clinical students only.

Please note that the order with which dissertation types are presented within each category is not based on their importance or quality. Students are free to select from the myriad of options provided. However, students must realize that regardless of the type of dissertation that they select, they still must secure approval of their topic and respective design and methodology from their dissertation committee.

A. Clinical and Applied

1) Quantitative research study. A dissertation may utilize the hypothetico-deductive method in which the logical and procedural flow extends from theory to hypothesis to predictions to testing of predictions and then reevaluation of theory in light of ensuing data. Examples of methodologies for these types of studies include but are not limited to, group experiments, single case research, quasi-experimental, ex post facto or causal comparative, correlational. With these types of studies, it is expected that students will develop specific research questions and hypotheses and will conduct empirical testing of predictions derived from these hypotheses. Other examples of quantitative research studies include meta-analyses and program evaluation/needs assessment. These types of studies are described in greater detail as separate categories.

2) Meta-analyses – an empirically-based approach to integrating and synthesizing a group of related studies in order to identify patterns, sources of agreement/disagreement, or other relations. Most meta-analyses will seek to accomplish these objectives using a common metric, such as an effect size.

3) Qualitative research study - The empirical-inductive method (e.g., qualitative research) involves first establishing a database and then engaging in a carefully thought-through approach of where to begin. These data can then be organized into empirical constructs from which a theoretical model may or may not be generated. Although desirable for quantitative research studies, it is by no means essential for category A3 studies to adhere to a process involving the generation of specific hypotheses and the empirical testing of predictions derived from these hypotheses. A well-designed exploratory study leading to the eventual development of hypotheses for future testing could also be acceptable.

4) *Systematic case study*. A systematic evaluation of a single case may be acceptable if it adheres to rigorous methodology. The definition of a “case” will differ depending on one’s focus. A case can refer to an organization, system, or process of evaluation. This kind of program evaluation uses a “case approach” to learn about the organization/system based on a comprehensive understanding of the system, grounded in theory, and obtaining extensive descriptions and analysis of that system. To illustrate: the study of how consultation services are integrated into a public school system can be an object of study; the process of implementing program evaluation into the organizational routine of a school district is another example of a case study; how school principals respond to the challenge of building based on leadership is a third.

The “pragmatic case study” model is another example of such a methodology. Such a case study involves a comprehensive, systematic, rigorous, qualitative analysis of one or more clinical case studies involving a particular type of presenting problem and theoretical approach of clinical interest to the student. These studies also involve standardized, quantitative measures of outcome, and sometimes standardized, quantitative measures of process. For examples of such case studies, see the open access, online, peer-reviewed journal, *Pragmatic Case Studies in Psychotherapy* (<http://pcsp.libraries.rutgers.edu>), edited by Dan Fishman, one of GSAPP's faculty members. For more about the rationale behind the journal, see the article by Fishman in Volume 1 (2005), Issue 1. These two examples are not the only two types of acceptable case studies, but offer examples.

5) *Program Evaluation and Needs Assessment*: Program evaluation is a systematic method for collecting, analyzing, and using information to answer questions about projects, policies or programs. Typically, dissertations can focus on either an ongoing or recently terminated program. A related type of dissertation involves a needs assessment. This approach entails the use of a systematic process for determining and addressing the specific needs for organizations or important stakeholders within that organization. In contrast, to program evaluation, a needs assessment tends to be an integral part of a planning process that can subsequently lead to some type of improvement in a system or organization. When deciding to conduct a program evaluation or needs evaluation, students should consult with the dissertation committee regarding expectations and appropriate procedures. Furthermore, regardless of whether a student wishes to conduct a program evaluation or a needs assessment, rigorous methods for collecting data are needed to inform decision making.

Clinical only

1) *Program Design* - The design in depth of a program of psychological strategy, methodology or techniques to achieve some goal consistent with contemporary principles of professional psychology. The program developed must demonstrate application of relevant theory, research, and consideration of similar programs reported in the literature in its design, and must include a detailed plan or guideline for the evaluation of the program developed, even though the evaluation will not be conducted as part of the dissertation. Suggested procedures or at least some discussion of issues and possible procedures for maintenance of the proposed program in terms of

available resources once the program organizers have departed from the scene must be built into the program proposal.

2) Review of the literature - An intensive and extensive survey of the literature in a specific problem area, perhaps with case illustrations but certainly including detailed conclusions and schema showing how the problem might be investigated empirically. The student must demonstrate a thorough awareness of methodology, feasibility, limitations, and special research problems in the area chosen even though the student does not necessarily intend to carry out the study him/herself.

3) Theoretical paper. Such a paper is expected to be substantive and of such a nature as to be generally acceptable to scholars in the chosen area. It must be integrative, creative, primarily non-speculative and rigorous.

4) Alternative approach - A dissertation including aspects of one or more of the above but which does not conform closely to the descriptions given. Such idiosyncratic proposals must have the written approval of the program director in addition to the approval of the committee members. It is anticipated that this type of proposal will be rare and subject to searching scrutiny prior to approval. It does, however, leave the door open for the student who feels that he or she has something unique and "different" to contribute which does not fall readily into any of the categories outlined above but is nevertheless of scholarly value.

STRATEGIES TO PREPARE TO CHOOSE A TOPIC

One possible strategy to prepare for the dissertation is by working with a co-operative faculty member on one or more faculty research projects early in the student's program. Often, related research questions will develop that can be pursued as dissertations. This is desirable for both students and faculty because it tends to prevent the dissertation from becoming an isolated academic exercise. Instead, the dissertation becomes part of a more comprehensive program of research that adds to knowledge in our field more than many individual projects could. It also means that instruments and relevant literature are likely to be available. Furthermore, there are advantages to several students working on related topics: they can "brainstorm" solutions to obstacles as they occur and share references and resources.

Even if you do not wish to develop a spin-off study into a dissertation, "getting your feet wet" by working on someone else's project will show you how research is done. This "insider" information could be useful in avoiding common misconceptions about research, and specifically, dissertation research. You will be "clued in" in advance to potential pitfalls.

BROWSE THROUGH PREVIOUS GSAPP DISSERTATIONS in areas that seem to be of interest. Students and faculty can access dissertations completed by former GSAPP from the RUcore link, <http://rucore.libraries.rutgers.edu/>, housed within the Rutgers Library electronic database. Please contact the Coordinator of Student Services if you have questions about accessing these prior dissertations.

anyone else whose input into the dissertation-quest process might be germane. However, it cannot be stressed too strongly that program research in which the student works with a faculty member or a group of faculty members and perhaps other students is usually preferable to the perusal by the student of an isolated topic which is unrelated or minimally related to the area of expertise and interest of any faculty member at all.

All students are strongly urged to attend one or more dissertation defenses. For obvious reasons pertaining both to information about procedure and allaying understandable anxieties, attendance at least one dissertation defense is strongly encouraged. Concerns, issues and questions can then be discussed with the student's Dissertation Committee and adviser, as need be.

In so doing, it is important to remember that the dissertation is a 9-credit project and should be capable of completion in 18-24 months.

STEPS TO COMPLETE DIFFERENT TYPES OF DISSERTATIONS

A. For all types of dissertations that involve a strong **empirical focus**, including most of the types of dissertations approved for both the Clinical and Applied programs, students should consider the following:

(1) *Definition of a Prospectus*: Prior to writing the formal proposal (full literature review, IRB approval, methods and analysis plan), some committees will require a written prospectus to make sure the project is feasible and appropriate. The format of the prospectus is up to the committee. One approach is to have the student write a 10-15 page prospectus that includes the statement of the problem, rationale for studying the problem, and clear description of the design and methodology. A reference section containing any material cited in the prospectus is to be included.

Explicit attention is needed at the prospectus stage to:

- Determining how the population of interest will be identified and sampled.
- Consideration of adequacy of the sample size in terms of statistical power. This necessitates knowing what statistical tests will be applied.)
- Ensuring reliability and validity of instruments that will measure the constructs under study.
- Pilot-testing and revising any instruments that will be developed by the student.
- If qualitative data will be collected, describing how reliability of any classifications or interpretations will be demonstrated; likewise, if observational data will be collected, how reliability will be assessed.
- If severe constraints on sample size are anticipated or if no suitable measures of the constructs can be identified, there must be careful consideration as to whether the project should be pursued.
- If the statistical analyses anticipated/planned are beyond the student's competence, then the student should indicate plans to take coursework in the area, or again re-evaluate the feasibility of the project.

(2) *Definition of a Proposal*: All students must have a formal dissertation proposal approved by the Dissertation Chair and the committee. The specifics of the proposal are at the discretion of the committee, but in an empirical study, the proposal will typically include a full literature review, clear statement of hypotheses, description of proposed methods and procedures, plan of analysis, references, and proof of IRB approval. Consult your Dissertation Chair throughout the initial idea stage through the formal proposal to ensure your dissertation topic is feasible and appropriate. All students planning an empirical study in which quantitative data will be collected are strongly urged to conduct a power analysis to determine the sample size needed to yield interpretable results. Students should be aware that the Institutional Review Board (human subjects approval) meets only once a month during the academic year and twice over the entire summer.

(3) After the proposal is approved and IRB approval is obtained, collect data.

(4) Analyze the data, and write up the dissertation.

B. For **Conceptual Analyses** of theoretical, meta-theoretical, methodological, and axiological issues, and illustrative case studies related to conceptual issues:

(1) *Definition of a Prospectus*: Prior to writing the formal proposal, some committees will require a written prospectus to make sure the dissertation is feasible and appropriate. The format of the prospectus is up to the committee. One model for non-empirical conceptual analyses would require the student to write a 5-10 page prospectus that outlines the area or issue to be explored including identifying the relevant literature and sub-issues. Attention should be given at this stage to identifying the arenas of relevant literature, and defining the focal issue.

(2) Submit full proposal for committee approval. All students must have a formal dissertation proposal approved by the chair and the committee. The specifics of the proposal are at the discretion of the committee.

(3) Write the dissertation.

C. When the Committee Chair decides that the student has completed the terms of the dissertation proposal and the current draft of the dissertation is of suitable quality, the chair will request a first abstract for review and signature. At this stage the abstract approval is for the purpose of circulation to the GSAPP faculty. Changes may be required for a final version of the abstract.

REMEMBER THAT THE ABSTRACT WILL BE READ OVER THE YEARS BY FAR MORE SCHOLARS THAN WILL READ THE DISSERTATION.

The student may then determine when the other committee member(s) can meet and schedule the defense date. After the defense, the final version of the dissertation and abstract must be approved in writing. Celebrations at the time of the oral defense are discouraged; a more appropriate time might be when the final copies of the dissertation are approved and turned in.

Finally, attention is drawn to the possibility that faculty may expect that an acceptable article for journal submission be one outcome of the dissertation process. There is even the possibility of a journal quality manuscript, together with appropriate Appendices, substituting for the traditional dissertation format. These are matters to be carefully discussed with your advisor and Dissertation Chairperson well before hand.

SUGGESTED GUIDE FOR THE DISSERTATION PROPOSAL

The following suggested outline of content may be departed from in whatever way is required for effective presentation of a particular set of materials, as long as the Dissertation Chairperson explicitly approves the proposed alternative. This proposed format is essentially the one, which will be used for the dissertation itself, with expansion of major sections. Part II, A will need to be modified accordingly if the dissertation does not involve specific hypotheses and derived predictions. In that case, Part II, B, will not apply.

I. Proposal cover sheet

A) Include title, the word Proposal, student's name, lines where committee members may sign, with their names typed underneath and date.

II. Introduction

A) Background of the problem to be investigated

This first section of the proposal usually indicates the relation of this study to the developing stream of thinking about the problem being investigated. This section, which can vary greatly depending on the expectations of a particular dissertation committee, discusses such issues as prior studies in the same area, field situations to which the study relates, and/or the conceptual framework out of which the study arises. This section should make clear how the study contributes to professional psychology. It should make clear what light has already been thrown upon the issues under investigation and what doubtful points remain to be investigated. If the study is to involve, hypotheses, it is in this section that the relationship between current knowledge and these specific hypotheses be made explicit. There should be a smooth flow from general background to specific theoretical formulation to the generation of specific hypotheses. It is important to explain why these particular hypotheses are selected. Irrelevant theoretical discourse and reference citations should be avoided.

B) Statement of Specific Hypotheses and Predictions

If applicable, in this section, the specific hypotheses are to be clearly and precisely stated. There may be one or more. Each hypothesis should lead to one or more specific, clearly-stated predictions. All crucial terms should be operationally defined. The predictions should be clearly explained and justified in terms of the hypotheses and any other relevant considerations.

III. Method

This section explains precisely how the predictions are to be tested. Inevitably, some aspects of the procedure will need to be modified or developed as the study proceeds, but this statement should be as specific as possible at this time. The following points usually need to be considered:

A) Participants

What persons, documents, or other sources are to be used in gathering data for the study. The discussion should point out any sampling assumptions and any characteristics of the groups selected which limit the applicability of the findings to other groups. The proposal should discuss what generalizations can be made based on the sample included in the study.

B) Procedures

The proposal should describe in detail the procedures to be used to obtain data. The discussion should point out what precautions are being taken to ensure objectivity, reliability, and validity, and the protection of the rights of subjects. Any study of reliability or validity or agreement of judges is part of the procedures and should be recorded. The study should discuss reliability and validity of tests, techniques and sources of data, especially those that depart from standard usage.

C) Proposed Analyses

In some studies, where treatment follows routine and well-known methods, this section may be brief: in other studies the student will need to explain at length how she/he intends to proceed from the data to his/her conclusions. Any assumptions made in the study should be made clear. It is not important to list a large number of conventional assumptions, but the student should indicate what assumptions about education, human nature, or the data used are necessary and critical in interpreting the data and in accepting the findings of the study. Ultimately, students should propose analyses that are in accordance with the guidance of their Dissertation Chair and committee.

IV. A reference list should be included. APA reference style should be used.

WRITING THE DISSERTATION IN APA MANUSCRIPT STYLE

To increase chances that students will submit dissertations for publication after final approval, dissertations must be written in the format of an APA journal manuscript. To do so, students should closely follow the latest APA Publication Manual. It is important to note that the dissertation will still retain some elements of a formal dissertation, including: (1) Title page, (2) Abstract, (3) Acknowledgements, (4) Table of Contents, (5) List of Tables, & (6) List of Figures. However, elements of APA manuscript style should be incorporated throughout, including taking out chapter breaks and chapter titles and using standard headings for manuscript (Introduction, Methods, Results, and Discussion). Regarding the placement of tables and figures, APA guidelines stipulate the placement of all tables and figures after the reference section. Student should follow this guideline unless otherwise indicated by the Dissertation Chair. That is, upon approval from the Dissertation Chair, students may place tables and figures in the narrative portion of the dissertation rather than after the references section. The introduction will still be longer than a typical manuscript (e.g., about 15-20 pages); alternatively, a longer literature review can be appended to the end of the manuscript as an appendix. Students should check with the Dissertation Chair for specific guidelines and/or expectations.

Page order of preliminary pages can be found at:

<http://gsappweb.rutgers.edu/cstudents/dissertation%20material/index.php>

[Page Order of Preliminary pages in Dissertation](#)

Page of Order of Dissertation

Introduction

Methods

Results

References

Tables

Figures

Appendices

PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS IN RESEARCH

If you are going to be conducting research with living humans as subjects or their records, the University and GSAPP insist that the student obtains proper Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval from the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs (ORSP). The student is responsible for obtaining proper IRB approval for any research (human or otherwise). Consult with your Dissertation Chair and the IRB Administrator as needed.

1. For information on all aspects of IRB approval, go to:
<http://orsp.rutgers.edu/Humans/default.php#general>
2. For information on what kinds of research may require IRB review, go to:
http://orsp.rutgers.edu/Humans/irb_notrequired.php.
3. There are three types of IRB review/status: **exempt**, **expedited**, and **full board review**.
 - a. Info on exempt: http://orsp.rutgers.edu/Humans/irb_exempt.php
 - b. Info on expedited: http://orsp.rutgers.edu/Humans/irb_expedited.php
 - c. All other approved protocols fall into Full Board Review.

Be aware: The IRB has only **one** submission deadline a month (as of 9/27/10, the deadline is the 12th of every month) and it usually takes the IRB 4-6 weeks to return a response to your proposal. Allow a second month for you to revise your proposal and obtain final approval.

Be aware 2: Exempt status does **NOT** mean that the student does not have to apply for IRB approval. It simply describes the type of review that is being done at ORSP. If you believe your study falls into exempt status, consult with your Chair and the IRB. You will then have to submit an “exempt” IRB review to ORSP. The student and committee are responsible for obtaining IRB approval or IRB exemption prior to the student commencing the dissertation.

General Guidelines for What kind of IRB submission you will have to submit.

First, read the definitions of exempt, expedited, and full review IRB applications at the ORSP website, following the website links above.

In the end, the sponsoring faculty member (e.g., Dissertation Chair) is presuming responsibility for the conduct of any student's research. Thus, the student will want to carefully discuss the procedures for IRB applications with the faculty member, along with any consultation with an IRB administrator.

Both the student and faculty should know: there is **NO SUBSTITUTE** for direct consultation with an IRB administrator. Consulting with a current or former faculty IRB reviewer does not constitute consultation with the Rutgers IRB.

Below are **general rules of thumb**, but most research studies require individual consideration. Students should discuss their individual projects with their faculty mentors and an IRB administrator as needed.

These guidelines hold for any independent human research, not just dissertation research.

General rules of thumb:

1. Any human research requires a submission to the IRB.
2. Any "independent" idea or project requires a student to submit an IRB application with them as Principal Investigator (PI). This is true for experimental research, secondary data analysis, or any project where they have "carved out" a piece of a larger project.
3. In most cases, any dissertation, master's thesis, or honors thesis would fall into this category of "independent" investigation or idea. Why would you approve of a dissertation that didn't represent independent ideas or execution?

Examples of Secondary Data analysis that require an IRB application:

1. Any independent idea or analysis calls for an IRB proposal.
2. Any data analysis that has access to private identifiable data would definitely need IRB approval. It will likely qualify as an "expedited" application, but this depends on the nature of the data.
3. Any data analysis using de-identified data: Student could likely get an "exempt" IRB approval, but this still requires a formal IRB application. To secure an "exempt" IRB approval, it would help if the faculty member submits an authorization letter indicating how they will give the student de-identified data, stripping it of any private, identifiable information.
4. This is true whether they are getting data from Rutgers sources or non-Rutgers sources. The critical factor is on identifiable private data or de-identified data. This would dictate the type of review (expedited or exempt).
5. What if a student is simply helping execute analysis that the faculty PI proposed in the initial protocol?

- a. The student should be listed in “key personnel,” and their role identified. Their Human Subjects Certification should be submitted to the IRB.
 - b. Ignore the word, “key.” Anyone who is “personnel” (helping design or conduct the study) should be listed in this section.
 - c. In this situation, the student is not doing anything independent. They could help in analysis, but it is unlikely that this would count as a dissertation.
6. What if a student is “carving out” a part of the project:
- a. Many students might contribute some kind of independent analysis, such as, new analysis that wasn’t proposed in the original protocol or might oversee some aspect of the original protocol and then given “ownership” of that data.
 - b. In this case, the student would be expected to apply for an IRB approval with them listed as PI. This protocol would describe the components of the student’s independent sub-study.
 - c. The student should also be listed under key personnel.
 - d. **Whether or not a student is listed in the key personnel section on someone’s project, DOES NOT impact the decision process in whether a student should apply for their own IRB protocol.
 - e. The fact that the student’s project is an independent project determines that they need to be the PI, with a faculty advisor. This is the case even if the faculty, as the data holder, is “giving data” to the student.
7. Students working with Publically available data:
- a. There are some data sets with no restrictions. These are truly publically available datasets (e.g., available online and the “data holders” have no review process). This likely wouldn’t need any IRB approval, but good to write an email to IRB to be sure.
 - b. There are some “public” data sets that have some restrictions. Here, the data holder has some kind of review process (to gain access to the data). This will require an IRB review. Some of these restricted data sets will actually require an IRB review.

Situations where the graduate student is an “Investigator.”

1. What if a student is truly serving as a Co-Investigator on a project (i.e., equally responsible for the conduct of the study as the faculty member)?
2. A graduate student and faculty cannot be simultaneous PIs as a general rule.
3. If the graduate student is listed as PI, then the faculty’s name gets moved down to Faculty Advisor.
4. If the faculty is listed as the PI, and a graduate student is serving as a true Co-Investigator, then, it is most likely appropriate for the student to be listed in the Key Personnel section as a Co-Investigator and as a contact person for IRB correspondence. However, this still does not excuse submission of an IRB application when it comes time for a dissertation. Again, if the student is conducting some kind of independent analysis for that project, they should have some IRB protocol with them listed as a PI.

- a. Contrast this to a collaborative faculty project. There could be 3 faculty working on a project together. They could have divided the project up into 3 parts for later publication, and they can submit ONE IRB application.
- b. A graduate student can't do this. There are different rules for them. The conservative recommendation would be that the graduate student has to submit their own IRB application (otherwise, why were they not PI on the original application?).
- c. Possible exceptions? Michelle Gibel says this is an appropriate time to consult with the IRB. There are some cases where truly equivalent work is done by the Faculty and graduate student and could be treated like collaborative faculty research. She would want to weigh the pros and cons of that decision with faculty and student.

Undergraduate research and honors theses:

1. Undergraduates can't be PI's. The faculty is technically the PI. The undergraduate investigator gets listed in the PI section, but the faculty has to put their name there too.
2. All undergraduates should submit an IRB application for their honors theses. The faculty will be listed as the PI, and the undergraduate student will be listed in the special spot for undergraduate investigators.

DISSERTATION PROPOSAL APPROVAL MEETING

The plan and/or design for the dissertation must be approved by all members of the dissertation committee at a meeting with the student before proceeding to carry out the proposal. This meeting is scheduled by the student when, in the opinion of the Dissertation Chair, the proposal is sufficiently developed to be used as the basic plan for an acceptable dissertation. At the proposal meeting, the student is expected to defend the proposal before the two committee members and to demonstrate knowledge and background sufficient to justify undertaking the dissertation as it has been proposed. The signed dissertation proposal is viewed as documented evidence that the student is authorized to develop the dissertation as proposed.

CLINICAL students give one copy of the Dissertation Proposal signature page (with original signatures), the Dissertation Proposal Successfully Defended form (with original signature), and the IRB approval (or written plan and timeline to apply) to the Department Assistant. Do this by October 15 of the year you apply for internship. Keep one signed copy of the signature page for yourself; this is your assurance that you will not be asked to do more than stipulated in the Proposal. The Dept. Assistant will send an official letter of approval to the Student Services Coordinator and to the student, with a copy kept in the student's file.

ORGANIZATIONAL AND SCHOOL students give one copy of the Dissertation Proposal signature page (with original signatures), the Dissertation Proposal Successfully Defended form (with original signature), and the IRB approval to the Department Assistant. Each student must also give one complete copy of the Dissertation Proposal (electronic or hard copy; committee's preference) to their Dissertation Committee members—the student is urged to keep a copy of the proposal for their files. Upon receipt of the required forms and IRB approval, the Department Assistant will send an official letter of approval to the Student Services Coordinator and to the student, with a copy kept in the student's file.

The “Dissertation Proposal Form” and “Signature Page Template” are available online at: <http://gsappweb.rutgers.edu/cstudents/dissertation%20material/index.php>

THE DISSERTATION DEFENSE

See “Dissertation Defense Checklist” and all dissertation templates on the GSAPP Dissertation Materials website at <http://gsappweb.rutgers.edu/cstudents/dissertation%20material/index.php>.

The oral defense of the dissertation is a scholarly public hearing; the dissertation is a public document. Any member of the GSAPP community or of the University may review the dissertation and attend the defense. Student and faculty attendance is encouraged. The Oral Defense is conducted by the Dissertation Committee and scheduled by the student through the Coordinator of Student Services Office after arranging the day and hour with Committee members. Clinical, School Psychology, and Organizational students must complete the Oral Specialty Comprehensive Exam before the actual Dissertation Defense.

The defense must be held at the University during hours when interested individuals might reasonably attend. The room/office to be used will be scheduled by the Coordinator of Student Services at the time the Defense Announcement is circulated. To announce the dissertation defense, the student must:

1. Send one electronic copy of the dissertation to the Student Services Coordinator, and deliver one copy to each of the committee members a minimum of a fortnight (2 weeks) prior to the desired date of the oral defense (the copy to the committee members can either be electronic or a paper copy depending on committee preference). Failure to observe this requirement will result in postponement of the oral defense.
2. Five (5) hard copies of the abstract, approved and signed by the committee chair, typed in the announcement format shown in Section 2 of the style guide, must also be submitted to the Coordinator of Student Services when you submit your electronic defense copy. One copy of the abstract will be given to the Dean, one copy will be given to either the Clinical or Applied Department Chairs, and two will be posted on widely trafficked bulletin boards at GSAPP (e.g., 3rd floor main bulletin board, Sylvia’s office).
3. An electronic copy of the **signed** abstract and defense announcement must also be sent to the Coordinator of Student Services at this time (this will likely require you to get your Chair’s signature on your abstract and then scan the document). These abstracts/announcements will be distributed to the GSAPP dean, bulletin boards, and your Department Chair.

It is recommended that Dissertation Chairs do not permit scheduling of a dissertation defense until they have seen a complete version of the dissertation that is satisfactorily close to a final version (penultimate version). Often students will schedule (and pressure Chairs to agree to) defense dates that ultimately prove unfeasible. Two outcomes often result: (1) the defense gets rescheduled, causing difficulties in scheduling or (2) the committee proceeds with the defense

with a non-passable dissertation, requiring numerous revisions post-defense. As a result, students who have expectations they will graduate will be disappointed.

The Dissertation Chair must approve the penultimate draft before the student distributes it to the committee for the oral defense. The committee may request a hard copy or electronic copy. Each copy is to include an abstract of less than 350 words, the maximum acceptable by Dissertation Abstracts Index. Draft copies must conform to dissertation style and context requirements. Save yourself grief; the closer the defense draft approximates the required format, the less format changes you will likely have to make after the defense. (See Section 2 of Dissertation Manual for style requirements). Style, formatting, or content revisions may be required after the Oral Defense. It is the decision of committee members as to which changes must be implemented, how, and whether the oral defense has been completed successfully by the student. The Dissertation Chair will oversee the content of the manuscript to ensure its correctness. Signing of the dissertation by the committee follows satisfactory completion of the oral defense and any changes required.

Formatting revisions may also be required by the Coordinator of Student Services to ensure the dissertation matches GSAPP and Rutgers formatting requirements. After review of the committee-approved dissertation, the Coordinator of Student Services will send requested revisions to the student and Dissertation Chair who will be responsible for overseeing revisions. Students should keep in mind final graduation deadlines when completing final revisions. It is then up to the Dissertation Chair to enforce the edits before the student submits the final version to the Coordinator of Student Services. The Coordinator will do a cursory review of this revised version. If there are still errors, the Coordinator will return the dissertation via email to the student and dissertation Chair and cc the Department Chair. The student will not be eligible to graduate until the style edits are complete.

Once the final dissertation is approved by the Dissertation Chair and committee and the Coordinator of Student Services, the student sends one electronic copy of the dissertation to the Coordinator of Student Services. Students must also complete all Rutgers administrative paperwork to ensure transfer of copyright, submission of dissertation to Rutgers libraries and RU Core, etc. See “Dissertation Defense Checklist” for all requirements, available on the GSAPP Dissertation Materials website. Finally, the student, only upon request, should provide the Dissertation Chair and/or the Dissertation Committee members a bound, hard copy of the dissertation. The student should consult with the Dissertation Chair and committee regarding whether a hard copy is requested.