

University of the Rockies
“Dissertation DNA”**Dissertation (and Proposal) Checklist**

Use this checklist to ensure that all aspects of the Proposal, and later the Dissertation, are sufficiently addressed.

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Dissertation Template

_____ Uses the University of the Rockies Dissertation Template for all drafts of the Proposal and Dissertation, including (in order):

_____ Title Page

_____ *Dissertation Acceptance for Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of PsyD/PhD form* (dissertation only)

_____ Acknowledgment page (optional)

_____ Table of Contents

_____ List of Tables and Figures*

_____ Abstract

_____ Chapter I: Introduction

_____ Chapter II: Review of the Literature

_____ Chapter III: Method

_____ Chapter IV: Results (dissertation only)

_____ Chapter V: Discussion (dissertation only)

_____ References

_____ Appendices

_____ Tables (if not included in the text of Chapter IV) *

_____ Biographical Statement (optional)

_____ Begins each chapter on a new page, headed with the word “Chapter” followed by the chapter number and title of the chapter.

***Tables, Figures, and Graphs:** It is generally preferred that any graphic or visual representation of data gained from the study be presented within the text of Chapter IV (where it can be logically placed and physically fits on the page or on a page immediately following the text where it is presented). This approach aids the reader in understanding and interpreting the results. However, since many professional journals require manuscripts submitted for publication to include such figures, tables, and graphs at the end of the paper (in an appendix), it is left to the preference and discretion of the student and Dissertation Committee Chairperson as to which format to follow in presenting graphic information.

General Writing Guidelines

- _____ Proposal and dissertation drafts must be in full compliance with APA formatting.
 - _____ An approved professional APA Style editor must review and verify review of the final dissertation draft prior to its submission. The student will be responsible for all related fees.
- _____ The proposal/dissertation follows a standard form and has a professional, scholarly appearance.
 - _____ Is written with correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling according to chapters 3 and 4 in *APA Publication Manual* (6th ed.) [also See Appendix of this document]
 - _____ Includes citations for direct quotations, paraphrasing, facts, and references to research studies
 - _____ Does not overly rely on secondary sources
 - _____ Includes all in-text citations in the reference list
- _____ The proposal is written in the future tense; the dissertation is written in the past tense.
- _____ The proposal/dissertation is written clearly in scholarly language.
 - _____ The writing is clear, precise, and avoids redundancy.
 - _____ The statements are specific, and topic sentences are established for paragraphs
 - _____ The flow of words is smooth and clear.
 - _____ Bridges are established between ideas.
- _____ The proposal/dissertation is logically and comprehensively organized.
 - _____ The chapters add up to an integrated “whole.”
 - _____ The subheadings identify the logic and movement of the dissertation.
 - _____ Transitions between chapters are smooth and coherent.
- _____ Tables and Figures
 - _____ Have formatting that conforms to APA format (Chapter 5 in *APA Publication Manual*, 6th edition)
 - _____ Contain (or illustrate) content that is informative, relevant, and concise
 - _____ Are placed in context with narrative text
 - _____ Have long tables that are included in an appendix
 - _____ Each have a unique title that is brief but clear and explanatory



- _____ Have figure numbers and titles that are placed *below the actual figure*
- _____ Have table numbers and titles that are placed *above the actual table*
- _____ Show copyright permission for any non-original content (if not in the public domain)

Title Page

- _____ Title of the dissertation
- _____ Name of student
- _____ Date
- _____ Name of chairperson
- _____ Names of committee members
- _____ The statement, “A Dissertation in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of [Doctor of Psychology OR Doctor of Philosophy]”

Abstract

- _____ Consists of one double-spaced page or less
- _____ Includes a concise description of the study, a brief statement of the problem, statement of purpose or importance, and a brief summary of methods and procedures
- _____ Includes a summary of sample size, findings, and implications (dissertation only)

Chapter I: Introduction

Introduces the reader to the nature of the dissertation by moving the focus of attention from a broad aspect to a more specific heading

Suggested sections include the following [Other formats are acceptable as long as all the content described is included]:

[no initial heading]

_____ Introductory paragraphs introduce the general topic area.

General Statement [or Background of Study]

_____ Describes a practical problem and the need for it to be addressed

_____ Supports the existence and impact of the practical problem with documentation

Statement of Problem

_____ Identifies a general research problem that will address the practical problem. What do you want to know that you don't know (that nobody knows) that will help to solve the practical problem?

_____ Focuses in on a specific research problem that the study proposes to address

_____ Clearly and logically demonstrates how the focus of the study is an important problem, worthy of study.

_____ Impact of the research problem is fully documented and supported.

_____ Discusses how the research study represents a unique approach to the research problem, adds to the research literature, and contributes to practice in the field.

_____ Explains how the study proposes to address the specific research problem

Purpose of the Study

_____ Provides a specific and accurate synopsis of the overall purpose of the study

_____ Connects the **Purpose of the Study** as addressing the specific research problem

_____ Includes a single-sentence Purpose Statement that succinctly describes the focus, methodology, population, and geographical location of the study

Ex: The purpose of this phenomenological study is to understand the experience of Generation X women in the Los Angeles area who desire to obtain their first executive position in the financial services industry.

_____ Briefly defines and delimits the specific area of the research

_____ Foreshadows the hypotheses to be tested or the questions to be raised as well as the importance of the study

_____ Clearly identifies and defines the central concepts or ideas of the study

_____ Identifies the unit of analysis in the study

_____ Justifies the general method of inquiry used in the study: qualitative, quantitative, or mixed method

For a quantitative study:

_____ Specifies at least two variables and a conjectured relationship between them to describe what will be studied

For a qualitative study:

_____ Identifies the phenomenon, situation, or factors of interest

_____ Indicates and justifies which qualitative methodology will be used

For a mixed methods study:

_____ Identifies the specific type of mixed method design--explanatory, exploratory, or triangulation.

_____ Reflects whether the qualitative and quantitative phases of the study are sequential or simultaneous

Importance of the Study

_____ Answers the following in a logical, explicit manner:

_____ What is the importance of this research?

_____ What will it contribute to theory and practice in the student's field of specialization?

_____ What are implications of the research?

Theoretical [or Conceptual] Framework

_____ Places the study within a particular theoretical area in the field under investigation

_____ Situates the study among other research studies within the theoretical area

_____ Briefly summarizes enough relevant research literature (historical, seminal, and current) to situate and justify the study based on its contribution to the existing body of research, referencing the more detailed discussions in Chapter II

_____ Articulates the theoretical base (quantitative only) or the conceptual framework (qualitative only) to show connection to a certain body of literature. (mixed method--address both theoretical and conceptual framework)

Research Questions [and Hypotheses]

_____ Clearly presents specific research questions and sub-questions to be addressed, referencing the more detailed discussions in Chapter III

_____ Includes research hypotheses for each research question and sub-question (quantitative only)

- _____ Includes research questions that are identified for the qualitative and quantitative phases (mixed method only)
- _____ Questions and hypotheses are elaborated on in a discussion format, not simply listed
- _____ Connects the research questions to the **Statement of Purpose**, showing how these questions will address the goals of the study

Overview of Research Design

- _____ Briefly describes the general methodology and design, including data collection method, population and sample, instrumentation, data collection, and analysis, with references to more detailed discussions in Chapter III
- _____ Shows how the particular research design is the most appropriate to address the goals of the study

Definition of Terms

- _____ Defines important terms as used in this study, especially those that may otherwise have multiple meanings
- _____ Uses citations to support the origin of the definitions
- _____ Defines important technical terms that may be unknown to a reader
- _____ Operationalizes key variables or constructs

Assumptions, Limitations and Delimitations

- _____ Describes the scope and bounds of the study (delimitations--boundaries researcher has set)
- _____ Addresses major limiting factors in the study that could possibly affect the results (If limitations are considerable, explains why the study is being conducted.)
- _____ Articulates assumptions about facts that are not actually verified
- _____ Addresses potential weaknesses of the study
- _____ Discusses generalizability of the study findings

Summary

- _____ Summarizes key points of the study
- _____ Gives an overview of the content of the remaining chapters in the study, bridging to Chapter II
- _____ Conforms to the recommended length of 15–25 pages for Chapter I

Chapter II: Review of the Literature

Scholarship entails comprehensive understanding of at least one academic community's historical and current treatment of the pertinent topic. In order to argue the legitimacy of the current study, a thorough understanding of what that study will add to the most current literature on the topic is necessary. Literature will be critically analyzed, synthesized, and integrated to produce a story that brings the reader along to understand where the study fits into the current debates and academic edges concerning the topic. Existing and historically seminal literature will provide a contextual framework within which the research design is situated. Additionally, a part of the literature review will provide an academic foundation for the methods and research design chosen.

Introduction

- _____ Begins with the purpose of the chapter, how it fits in the dissertation, and the organization of the chapter
- _____ Frames the review by restating the topic and research questions

Search Strategy

- _____ Describes the strategy used to collect relevant literature
 - _____ Indicates which search engines were used
 - _____ Lists which search terms were used
- _____ Indicates strategy for identifying historically seminal (classic) studies and theorists' writings
- _____ Justifies most appropriate time interval for current sources (last 2–3 years? Last 5 years?)
- _____ If applicable, explains the lack of currency of the most recent publications
- _____ Reviews strategy for focusing in on empirical research that most closely resembles the current study

[Review of Related Research and Literature]

(Various headings in body of chapter)

- _____ The review is an integrated, critical analysis and synthesis of the relevant research and other scholarly literature published on the topic
 - _____ Includes the most current scholarship and important historical theory and research, when appropriate, to situate the topic
 - _____ Synthesizes prior research to illustrate what is currently known about the research problem
 - _____ Compares and contrasts different theories and research results

- _____ Evaluates previous research and related theory
- _____ Integrates various studies and theories to relate a story of the historical and current state of knowledge on the topic
- _____ Addresses how the proposed research fits in the context of research to date
- _____ Draws mostly from published journal articles in peer-reviewed journals or sound academic books containing primary material; provides justification for using other sources
- _____ Has a specific organization for the review. for example, organizes the review around major ideas or themes or organizes the review historically
- _____ The literature review needs to be *comprehensive*, covering the most important theories or research findings upon which the research problem (and hypotheses) was based.
 - _____ Relates the study to previous research
 - _____ Identifies how the study will extend current knowledge
 - _____ Defines the most important aspects of the theory that will be examined or tested (for quantitative studies)
 - _____ Substantiates the conceptual framework for the study (for qualitative studies)
- _____ Clearly relates the review of the related research and literature to the **Statement of Problem** as expressed in the
 - _____ research questions
 - _____ hypotheses (quantitative)
 - _____ population
 - _____ context/setting
- _____ Includes a discussion of differing and common methodologies previously used to study the research problem, including their strengths and limitations
- _____ Includes a literature-based description of the research variables (quantitative studies) or central phenomenon, situation, or factors of interest (qualitative studies)
- _____ Includes literature pertaining to the population and context or setting
- _____ Reviews literature related to research method and research design, including major and foundational sources in that design and its application to the research problem

Summary

- _____ Summarizes key points of the relationship between the study's research question(s) and the literature
- _____ Summarizes the study's contribution to the literature
- _____ Bridges to Chapter III by summarizing literature-based arguments for choosing a



particular methodology

_____ Conforms to the recommended length of s 30–50 pages for Chapter II

Chapter III: Method

The method chapter discusses the procedures to be followed in conducting the study (in the final draft, the methods that were followed) and the overall research design. The content and format of Chapter III will vary depending on whether the study is a qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods study.

Introduction

- _____ Begins with the purpose of the chapter, how it fits in the dissertation, and the organization of the chapter.
- _____ Describes the method of inquiry used (e.g., quantitative, qualitative, mixed method, meta-analysis, program evaluation, etc.).
- _____ Describes the specific research methodology chosen and how it derives logically from the **Statement of Problem** and the research questions

[Qualitative]

Methodology Selected

- _____ Describes which qualitative methodology will be used
 - _____ Justifies choice of methodology using major and foundational sources
 - _____ Explains why other possible choices would be less effective
- _____ Describes specific research questions and sub-questions (where appropriate) that are
 - _____ Clear and succinct
 - _____ Congruent with the **Statement of Problem**
 - _____ Answerable
 - _____ Few in number
 - _____ Clearly stated
 - _____ Open-ended (*not* yes/no questions)
- _____ Describes the role of the researcher in the data collection procedure
 - _____ Addresses the potential impact and minimization of researcher bias through methodological approaches

Study Participants

- _____ Describes and justifies the context (including site) for the study
- _____ Clearly defines both the general study population and the specific population
 - _____ Demonstrates (and documents) the ability to access the population
 - _____ Describes and justifies the sampling approach
 - _____ Describes how the characteristics of the sample population align with the

general population

- _____ Discusses how the sample selection impacts the generalizability of the study
- _____ Identifies strategies for recruiting participants
- _____ Specifies appropriate criteria for selecting participants
- _____ Addresses the relationship between the researcher and the participants
- _____ Justifies the number of participants

Data Collection

- _____ Describes and justifies the data collection method(s) (e.g., interview, focus group, observation)
 - _____ Addresses what types of data will be collected and the unit(s) of analysis
 - _____ Includes detailed protocol(s) in appendix for data collection (e.g., interview protocol, focus group protocol, etc.)
 - _____ Justifies contents of data collection protocols by connection to the research questions posed in relation to the qualitative paradigm chosen
- _____ Clearly describes the process by which the data was generated, gathered, and recorded
- _____ Clearly describes the systems used for keeping track of data and emerging understandings (research logs, reflective journals, and cataloging systems)

Procedures Followed

- _____ States the sequence of steps followed in conducting the research from development of the research instrument(s) to data analysis
- _____ Details all steps in a way that another researcher could follow the steps to reproduce the study
- _____ Explains the relation of the pilot study to the full study

Trustworthiness

- _____ Addresses credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability
- _____ Shows evidence of quality by discussing how procedures will be/were followed to assure the accuracy of the data and lessen the impact of researcher bias (e.g., trustworthiness, member checks, triangulation, etc.)

Ethical Concerns

- _____ Provides adequate measures for ethical protection of participants
- _____ Includes detailed information about the informed consent process and how informed consent will be obtained
- _____ Includes detailed information about how confidentiality is addressed



Data Analysis

- _____ Articulates how and when the data will be or was analyzed
 - _____ Aligns the detailed data analysis plan with the specific research design to generate answers to the research questions
 - _____ Describes procedures for dealing with discrepant cases
 - _____ If a software program was used to aid analysis, clearly describes how it was used
 - _____ Gives details about the coding procedure and how themes or categories were developed

[Quantitative]

Methodology Selected

- _____ Includes a description of the research design and approach
- _____ Provides justification for using the research design and approach
- _____ Demonstrates that the research design and approach derive logically from the problem or issue statement
- _____ Supports the research design and its application with major and foundational sources

Research Questions/Hypotheses

- _____ Describes specific research questions and hypotheses (where appropriate) that
 - _____ Are clear and succinct
 - _____ Are congruent with the **Statement of Problem**
 - _____ Are answerable/testable
 - _____ Correspond to the number of variables of interest
 - _____ Have hypotheses that correspond to research questions
 - _____ Are clearly stated
 - _____ Are open-ended (*not* yes/no questions)

Population and Sample

- _____ Identifies and describes the source of the specific population and the population's characteristics
- _____ Identifies that permission has been obtained to access the population, if relevant
- _____ Describes the sampling method, its appropriateness, and the sampling frame
- _____ Identifies the sample size as sufficient in terms of statistical power to support the analyses

_____ Identifies the criteria for selecting subjects

_____ Describes the sample characteristics

Ethical Concerns

_____ Identifies procedures for protection and ethical treatment of human subjects

_____ Describes the informed consent process in detail, including how human subjects will provide their informed consent, where applicable

_____ Describes procedures to protect confidentiality and anonymity in data collection, analysis, reporting, and storage

_____ Where applicable, describes in detail any treatment or intervention to which human subjects will be exposed

_____ Identifies concealment or deception as part of the treatment, if used

_____ Identifies the process for debriefing human subjects following use of concealment or deception

_____ Identifies if a control group will be used, if the group will receive a standard intervention, and the nature of that intervention

Instrumentation

List and describe the survey, research, or testing instruments and data collection forms (to be) used in gathering data for the study. The reason for the use of these instruments should also be given. Defend the choice of instruments and address reliability, validity, and utility of the instruments.

_____ Describes in detail all instrumentation or data collection tools, including

_____ The instrument name, if using an existing instrument

_____ The specific type of instrument

_____ The instrument's measures in terms of constructs, concepts, or variables

_____ The scoring of scales, subscales, typologies and their interpretation

_____ Whether a new instrument is developed or an existing instrument is modified and describes its use

_____ The published reliability and validity statistics for existing instruments OR a detailed plan for statistically assessing the reliability and validity of new or modified instrument(s) or existing instruments without established reliability or validity

_____ Includes a detailed description of data that comprises each variable in the study

_____ Includes operational definitions of variables

_____ Provides a clear explanation of how the value of each variable will be derived

from the instrument

_____ Identifies the level of measurement (NOIR) for each variable

_____ Either describes established (published) reliability and validity statistics or a clear plan to statistically validate the instrument (for modified or created instruments)

Data Collection

_____ Describes any pilot study results, if applicable

_____ States the sequence of steps followed in conducting the research from development of the research instrument(s) to data analysis

_____ Details all steps such that another researcher could follow the steps to reproduce the study

Data Analysis

Addresses how the data will be/was analyzed. What statistical methods were used?

_____ Includes a detailed analysis plan that explains the descriptive and/or inferential analyses proposed or used, such as

_____ Descriptive statistical procedures

_____ Whether the data are normally distributed or the distribution is skewed

_____ Parametric and/or nonparametric statistical procedures

_____ Statistical power

Validity

_____ Addresses internal and external validity threats and how they will be or were addressed

[Mixed Method]

Methodology Selected

_____ Includes a description of the specific mixed method research design and approach

_____ Research questions reflect the two phases, qualitative and quantitative, and the ordering of the two phases consistent with the specific mixed method design (explanatory, exploratory, or triangulation); hypotheses correspond to quantitative RQs, where appropriate

_____ Provides justification for using the specific research design and approach

_____ Shows that the research design and approach derives logically from the problem or issue statement

_____ Supports the research design and its application with major and foundational sources

Research Questions/Hypotheses

- _____ Describes specific research questions and hypotheses (where appropriate) that
 - _____ Are clear and succinct
 - _____ Are congruent with the Statement of Problem
 - _____ Are answerable/testable
 - _____ Correspond to the number of variables of interest
 - _____ Correspond to research questions (if they are hypotheses)
 - _____ Are clearly stated
 - _____ Are open-ended (*not* yes/no questions)

Population and Sample

- _____ Identifies and describes the source of the specific population and the population's characteristics for both phases
- _____ Identifies that permission has been obtained to access the population, if relevant
- _____ Describes for both phases the sampling method, its appropriateness, and the sampling frame
- _____ Identifies the sample size as sufficient in terms of statistical power to support the quantitative analyses
- _____ Identifies the sample size as sufficient in terms of data saturation for the qualitative phase
- _____ Identifies the criteria for selecting subjects for both phases
- _____ Describes the sample characteristics for both phases

Ethical Concerns

- _____ Identifies procedures for protection and ethical treatment of human subjects
- _____ Describes the informed consent process in detail, including how human subjects will provide their informed consent, where applicable
- _____ Describes procedures to protect confidentiality and anonymity in data collection, analysis, reporting, and storage of data
- _____ Describes in detail, where applicable, any treatment or intervention to which human subjects will be exposed
 - _____ If concealment or deception will be used, identifies that as part of the treatment
 - _____ Identifies the process for debriefing human subjects following use of concealment or deception
 - _____ Identifies if a control group will be used, if the group will receive a standard intervention, and the nature of that intervention

Instrumentation

List and describe the survey, research or testing instruments; interview or observational protocols; and data collection forms (to be) used in gathering data for the study. The reason for the use of these instruments should also be given. Defend the choice of instruments and address reliability, validity, and utility of the instruments.

Quantitative phase:

- _____ Describes in detail all instrumentation or data collection tools, including
 - _____ The instrument name, if using an existing instrument
 - _____ The specific type of instrument
 - _____ The instrument's measures in terms of constructs, concepts, or variables
 - _____ The scoring of scales, subscales, typologies, and their interpretation
 - _____ Whether a new instrument is developed or an existing instrument is modified and describes its use
 - _____ The published reliability and validity statistics for existing instruments OR a detailed plan for statistically assessing the reliability and validity of new or modified instrument(s) or existing instruments without established reliability or validity

Qualitative phase:

- _____ Describes and justifies data collection method(s) (e.g., interview, focus group, and observation)
- _____ Justifies choices about which data to collect
 - _____ Addresses what types of data will be collected and the unit(s) of analysis
 - _____ Includes detailed protocol(s) in appendix for data collection (e.g., interview protocol, focus group protocol, etc.)
 - _____ Justifies contents of data collection protocols by connection to the research questions posed in relation to the qualitative paradigm chosen

Data Collection

- _____ Describes any pilot study results, if applicable
- _____ States the sequence of steps followed in conducting the research, from development of the research instrument(s) to data analysis
 - _____ Details all steps such that another researcher could follow the steps to reproduce the study
- _____ Describes the role of the researcher in the qualitative data collection procedure

_____ Addresses through methodological approaches the potential impact and minimization of researcher bias

Data Analysis

Addresses how the data were analyzed. What statistical methods were used?

_____ Includes an explanation of descriptive and/or inferential analyses used in the study, such as

_____ Level of measurement (NOIR) for each quantitative variable

_____ Description of parametric, nonparametric, or descriptive analytical tools used

_____ Distribution of the quantitative data

_____ Statistical power

_____ A detailed explanation of how qualitative data will be or were analyzed, procedures used, and units of analysis used

_____ Data analysis reflects the phases in alignment with the simultaneous or sequential mixed method design and explains how analysis of qualitative and quantitative data will generate or generated answers to the research questions

Quality

_____ Addresses internal and external validity threats

_____ Addresses trustworthiness, including: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability

[For all Methods of Inquiry]

Summary

_____ Summarizes key points in the chapter

_____ Bridges to Chapter IV

_____ Conforms to the recommended length of 10–25 pages for Chapter III

Chapter IV: Results

This chapter focuses on presentation of the results of the analysis of data gathered through the procedures detailed in Chapter III. The data analysis reported in Chapter IV must align with the processes detailed in Chapter III. The data are not presented as “raw” data. Instead, the student presents the results of the analyses conducted, aligned with the research questions and, if used, hypotheses. Presentation of the results place the findings in the context of the research questions and/or hypotheses. The format and content of this Results chapter differs greatly depending on whether the study is qualitative, quantitative, or mixed method. The checklists below are labeled accordingly.

- _____ Organizes all results such that they are easily understood by the reader (does not just present masses of data for the reader to analyze)
- _____ Leads the reader carefully through the findings, highlighting the most important observations
- _____ Presents a simple, clear, and complete account of the results
- _____ Uses APA-formatted tables, charts, graphs, and/or illustrations for clarity
- _____ Does not just copy and paste the outputs of statistics or other programs
- _____ Omits discussion of the findings (which will be presented in Chapter V)

Introduction

- _____ Begins with the purpose of the chapter, shows how it fits in the dissertation, and discusses the organization of the chapter
- _____ Re-establishes the purpose of the study and the research questions [and hypotheses]

Pilot Study

- _____ Discusses details regarding conducting the pilot study
- _____ Reports any modifications made to the proposed research design due to
 - _____ Difficulties encountered in conducting the Pilot Study
 - _____ Results of the Pilot Study

[Qualitative]**Sample**

- _____ Presents a description of the sample participants and sample demographics or other appropriate characteristics of the unit(s) of study

Data Collection

- _____ Summarizes the actual logistics of the data collection
- _____ Describes unusual circumstances encountered during data collection

Data Analysis and Results

- _____ Presents the results of analysis, rather than raw data, illustrated with selected representative quotes in a way to make sense to the reader
- _____ Clearly presents the findings
 - _____ Builds logically from the problem and the research design
 - _____ Presents the findings, reflecting analysis consistent with the specific research design—goes beyond reporting percentages of who said what or just identifying themes and patterns
 - _____ Presents the findings by major themes and sub-themes using section headings



that are representative of the themes

- _____ Presents findings in a manner that addresses the research questions
- _____ Supports all findings with data
- _____ Accounts for all salient data in the findings
- _____ Includes discrepant cases and nonconfirming data in the findings

[Quantitative]

Sample

- _____ Presents description of the sample and sample demographics or other appropriate characteristics of the unit of study
 - _____ Does not present raw data; presents results of descriptive and inferential analyses in a way that makes sense to the reader

Data Collection

- _____ Summarizes the actual logistics of the data collection
- _____ Describes unusual circumstances encountered during data collection

Data Analysis and Results

- _____ Organization of results aligns with and addresses research questions and hypotheses
- _____ Findings are presented by major themes and sub-themes, using section headings that are representative of the themes
- _____ Demonstrates rigorous methodological approaches
 - _____ Reflects appropriate and correct use of data collection instruments
 - _____ Uses research conventions and standard language/terminology to describe measures
 - _____ Reports results of pilot tests, if used
 - _____ Describes and justifies modifications to existing instruments based on the results of pilot test
 - _____ Describes how any modifications affect instrument scoring and/or interpretation
- _____ Results of data analyses
 - _____ Uses appropriate tools and approaches to display results
 - _____ Makes interpretation and explanation of results consistent with the analyses
 - _____ Reflects alignment with the specific research design, the research questions or hypotheses, and the study's theoretical or conceptual framework
 - _____ Makes the organization and presentation of results correspond to and address each research question and hypotheses, when used

- _____ Reports results of hypothesis testing and indicates support for accepting or rejecting the null hypothesis when hypotheses are used
- _____ Develops sound analyses that do not reflect major statistical errors
- _____ Reports results that reflect conventional research language and format
- _____ Highlights findings that approach statistical significance, such as $p < .10$
- _____ Identifies any inconsistencies or contradictions reflected in the findings and suggests plausible explanations
- _____ Includes additional findings

Conclusions

- _____ Concludes by logically and systematically summarizing the results pertaining to the research questions and hypotheses

[Mixed Method]

Sample

- _____ Presents description of the sample and sample demographics, or other appropriate characteristics of the unit of study, for both phases of the study
 - _____ Does not present raw data; presents results of descriptive and inferential analyses and analysis of qualitative data in a way that makes sense to the reader
 - _____ Description of the sample reflects sample size and characteristics for each phase of the research (qualitative and quantitative)

Data Collection

- _____ Summarizes the actual logistics of the data collection
- _____ Describes unusual circumstances encountered during data collection

Data Analysis and Results

- _____ Organization of results aligns with and addresses the research questions and hypotheses, consistent with the type of mixed method design
- _____ Findings are presented by major themes and sub-themes, using section headings that are representative of the themes
- _____ Presents the approaches and results for both phases (qualitative and quantitative)
 - _____ For an explanatory design, presents quantitative results first, describes how these findings were explored in the qualitative phase, then presents the qualitative findings
 - _____ For an exploratory design, presents qualitative results, explains how these

findings informed the quantitative phase, then presents the quantitative findings

_____ In a triangulation design, presents both sets of data and triangulates the findings from the two phases

_____ Demonstrates rigorous methodological approaches

_____ Reflects appropriate and correct use of data collection instruments

_____ Uses research conventions and standard language and terminology to describe measures

_____ Reports results of pilot tests, if used

_____ Describes and justifies modifications to existing instruments based on the results of pilot test

_____ Describes how any modifications affect instrument scoring and/or interpretation

_____ Results of data analyses

_____ Uses appropriate tools and approaches to display results

_____ Interprets and explains results consistent with the analyses

_____ Reflects alignment with the specific mixed method research design, the research questions or hypotheses, and the study's theoretical or conceptual framework.

_____ Makes the organization and presentation of results correspond to and address each research question and hypotheses, when used

_____ Reports results of hypothesis testing and indicates support for accepting or rejecting the null hypothesis when hypotheses are used

_____ Develops analyses that are sound and do not reflect major statistical errors

_____ Reports the results that reflect conventional research language and format

_____ Highlights findings that approach statistical significance, such as $p < .10$

_____ Identifies any inconsistencies or contradictions reflected in the findings and suggests plausible explanations

_____ Includes additional findings

_____ Highlights findings that approach statistical significance, such as $p < .10$

Conclusions

_____ Concludes by logically and systematically summarizing the results pertaining to the research questions and hypotheses

_____ Recommended length of Chapter IV is variable, based on the nature of the data

Chapter V: Discussion

The discussion chapter is where you interpret the importance of your findings for research and practice and discuss your results within the context of other research on the topic. You may want to go back and update Chapter II with any new research studies that may now seem important to the study. In Chapter V, you will address the extent to which your results converge with or diverge from previous research. You will revisit the research you reviewed in your introduction and review of literature, and any other pertinent literature, and discuss how your results add to the knowledge on the topic. You should also discuss any limitations of your research (e.g., generalizability issues or measurement limitations). Finally, you will discuss the implications of your results and applications to practice, if appropriate, and provide suggestions for future research. [Section headings below are only suggestive.]

Introduction

- _____ Begins with the purpose of the chapter, how it fits in the dissertation, and the organization of the chapter
- _____ Reviews the need for the study, the purpose of the research, the research questions that guided the study, and briefly restates the findings presented in Chapter IV.
 - _____ A restatement of the research problem is helpful to provide context

Interpretation of Findings

- _____ Includes an overview and interpretation of the major findings of the study
 - _____ Includes conclusions that address all the research questions and/or hypotheses
 - _____ Carefully examines all findings, including those that do not support or only partially support the hypotheses (quantitative only)
 - _____ Contains references to all results reported in Chapter IV
 - _____ Is comprehensive in terms of addressing the range of findings
 - _____ Is bounded by the evidence collected

Limitations of Study

- _____ Discusses limitations that may affect the validity, generalizability, or trustworthiness of the results
- _____ Includes a reflection on the researcher's experience with the research process (qualitative only)
 - _____ Discusses possible personal biases or preconceived ideas and values
 - _____ Discusses the influence of the researcher on the participants or the situation
 - _____ Reflects on student's changes in thinking as a result of the study

Implications for Theory and Research

- _____ Situates the findings in a larger body of literature on the topic, including the conceptual/theoretical framework
- _____ Considers the findings in light of published research studies
- _____ Discusses implications of the current study findings as pertinent to current theory
- _____ Discusses implications of findings that support, extend, and refute prior knowledge

Implications for Practice

- _____ Includes implications of the current study's findings for professional practice or applied settings (if applicable)

Recommendations for Further Research

Based on the findings of the current study

- _____ Identifies topics that need closer examination and may generate a new round of research questions
- _____ Recommends alternative research methods and design

Conclusion

- _____ Closes with a strong concluding statement that makes the “take-home message” clear
- _____ Conforms to the recommended length of 15–25 pages for Chapter V

References

- _____ Alphabetically lists *all* references cited in the dissertation
- _____ Uses APA Style for listing references
- _____ *Does not* list any references that were not actually cited in the dissertation

Appendix (or Appendices)

- _____ Includes all additional information or materials that support but are not a part of the study in Chapters I–V. Examples include copies of instructions for participants; permissions obtained from organizations or agencies to use resources, materials, or facilities; descriptions of any special conditions of the research, etc. Additional tables or graphs that supplement but do not provide data gained from the study should also be included here.

Biographical Statement (*Optional*)

- _____ Includes a brief biographical statement about the author. The focus should be on the professional aspects of the individual's life but may include items such as place of birth, educational background, significant life events, reasons for choosing the field of study/specialization, and interest in the content of the study being undertaken.



Resources

Ken Sherman's Writing Tips

Rudestam, K. E., & Newton, R. R. (2001). *Surviving your dissertation: A comprehensive guide to content and process* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

University of the Rockies Dissertation Handbook

Walden University Proposal/Dissertation Rubric

Appendix: Dissertation Writing Tips

1. In referencing quotes or paraphrasing others, sentences should be written in **past** tense. For example, instead of saying *Turner presents*, writers should use *Turner presented*.
2. Avoid words that imply absolutes, such as *the research proves*. Instead, scholarly terminology such as *the research data or findings suggest* or *imply* is more appropriate.
3. Use of vague or colloquial expressions that one might use in normal conversations should not be used in scholarly writings. Examples inappropriate for dissertations: *nevertheless*, *on one hand*, *in other words*, *corner the market*, *otherwise*, *at the broadest level*, *ripple effects*, *fills the gap*, *as a bonus*, *closed the loop*, *large*, *argued* (unless the writer knows an argument did occur), *bridging the gap*. Avoid the use of jargon and expressions that are not scholarly.
4. Avoid unnecessary, meaningless, and/or transitional words in scholarly writing. Examples include: *however*, *furthermore*, *therefore*, *clearly*, *moreover*, *thus*, *interestingly*, *consequently*, etc.
5. Ensure that the referents for all pronouns are clear. Avoid the use of pronouns such as *this*, *that*, *their*, *them*, *those*, *its*, etc. unless the referent is clearly and specifically known.
6. Watch the use of singular and plural in the same sentence. Subject, verb, and object should all be either singular or plural. Be consistent, even between sentences.
7. The word *data* is plural; the singular is *datum*.
8. Do not use an apostrophe when referencing events occurring within a specific year of a given decade. For example, when referring to events that occurred within the year 1980, one should write, 1980s and not 1980's.
9. Avoid absolute phrases such as *will contribute* or *will show*. It is recommended that learners use phrases such as *may* or *might contribute*.
10. Always use specific references to time. Vague references, such as *today*, *recent*, *currently*, and *this* should be avoided because some readers may not read the dissertation until sometime in the future.
11. All paragraphs should contain 3–5 sentences that support a **single idea**. Many learners inappropriately construct paragraphs containing only one or two sentences. Conversely, many learners inappropriately have very long paragraphs that are composed of unrelated sentences.
12. Students often overuse the words *this researcher* when it may be more important to state what occurred in the study. Instead of *this researcher placed the mouse in the tub*, say *the mouse was placed in the tub*. Focus on the action taken rather than on yourself as the performer of the action.



13. Avoid anthropomorphisms (attributing human characteristics to an inanimate object). *Research cannot demonstrate or show* (or actually do much of anything). *Research results can indicate*.
14. Avoid Stringy Sentences. Stringy sentences are so long the reader forgets the beginning of the sentence before reaching the end. Break long sentences down into smaller sentences. A good rule of thumb is that sentences should be fewer than 40 words. Longer sentences should be revised for succinctness and clarity. See sections 3.08 and 3.09 in the *APA Publication Manual* (6th ed.).
15. Past tense should be used to describe previous research or when referencing quotes, as the process has already been completed. An example of the appropriate use of past tense might be: *Jones (2005) defined* or *Smith (2004) published*.
16. Proposals and dissertations should be written in scholarly language. Non-scholarly words that begin sentences may be redundant with other words or ideas in the sentence. Revise to scholarly tone and presentation. See section 3.21 in *APA Publication Manual* (6th ed.). Examples may include, among others: *Additionally, As a result, Accordingly, Because of, Clearly, Consequently, Essentially, Finally, Furthermore, For example, However, In addition, In spite of, It was found, Moreover, Nevertheless, Overall, Therefore, and Thus*.
17. Place periods and commas within closing quotation marks (US rule; different in UK). Colons and semicolons are placed outside closing quotation marks. Question marks and explanation points should be inside the quotation marks only if they are part of the quoted material.