

Educational Leadership and Policy Studies Program Dissertation Policies and Procedures

Selection of the Doctoral Research Committee

As part of the planning process for the written comprehensive exam, each doctoral student will select the members of his/her Doctoral Research Committee. Each Doctoral Research Committee will include four members of the Graduate Faculty as follows:

- (1) the Research Advisor who is a member of the Educational Leadership Program faculty and will serve as the committee chair (the Research Advisor must hold Doctoral Research Faculty status and may or may not have been the student's program advisor)
 - (2) a committee member from the ELPS program faculty (This person may serve as a co-advisor.)
 - (3) a committee member from the ELPS program faculty or any other UNC program that pertains to the student's dissertation topic or methodology
 - (4) a Faculty Representative from a program area other than Educational Leadership and Policy Studies
- When choosing the chair and committee members, three major criteria should be taken into consideration: (1) the expertise of the faculty in the content area of the dissertation; (2) the ability of the faculty in the research methodology to be used in the dissertation; and (3) the ability of the student to work with each of the committee members individually and collectively.

In building the Doctoral Research Committee, the student will first identify the Research Advisor. The Research Advisor will then work with the student in identifying the remaining members of the committee. All committee members, including the Faculty Representative, are involved in the preparation of the research proposal and all phases of the research, including the student's proposal hearing and dissertation defense.

Request forms for the appointment of the committee may be found on the Graduate School's website. The Dean of the Graduate School officially appoints the Doctoral Research Committee which can not be done until the appropriate paper work has been completed.

Dissertation Standards

As Ed.D. students in the Educational Leadership program approach the dissertation, the faculty have clear expectations and standards for their research. In particular, our faculty believe these expectations should be achieved:

- Does the problem statement clearly identify critical issues influencing the field of educational leadership?
- Are influential role groups identified that would be interested in the study?
- Are the limitations of the study clearly stated? Are appropriate precautions taken to minimize these limitations?
- Are there clear connections between the literature reviewed, problem statement, purpose, and research questions?
- Do the methodology, research design, and research methods address the research questions? Can the student explain what he/she did and why?
- Are the data analysis strategies appropriate for the investigation and do they answer the research questions?
- Are the findings clearly presented as drawn from the data analysis?
- Do the conclusions emerge from the study's findings?
- Are the findings and conclusions compared and contrasted with appropriate literature?
- Are implications for future research and practice clearly stated and do they flow from the findings and conclusions of the investigation?

Dissertation Proposal Review

Dissertation proposals should be developed by the student in cooperation with the Doctoral Research (Co-)Advisor(s) and committee members. When the student and the Research Advisor feel that the proposal is complete, the student may schedule the dissertation proposal hearing. Generally, the proposal will include all sections

that typically appear in chapters one through three of the final dissertation. The material included in these chapters is essential for the student to understand the identified research problem, the related research, and the research design for the study.

Quality control at the proposal stage is as important as the final dissertation. If the dissertation proposal is well developed, then the execution of the actual data collection and analysis will be a straightforward process. If the proposal is poorly conceived, the student will likely encounter major problems in the execution of the study.

The proposal hearing must be scheduled with at least three weeks prior notice and a copy of the completed proposal must be given to each committee member at least two weeks prior to the hearing date. The proposal hearing will be open to any interested Educational Leadership and Policy Studies faculty members and students. If other faculty or students wish to attend the hearing, they should contact the Research Advisor or student prior to the session.

The general format for the proposal hearing will begin with a presentation (15-20 minutes) on the proposed study by the student, particularly the methodology to be used and the rationale for this methodology. This will be followed by questions and discussion among the committee members and the student. When the committee is ready to make a decision, the chair will excuse the student and any guests. The committee will then make a decision on the acceptability of the proposal and any necessary changes. The student will be invited to rejoin the committee and will be informed of the committee's decision. Normally, a dissertation proposal hearing will last about two hours.

The committee may decide to approve the proposal without changes, to approve it with specific changes, or to disapprove the proposal altogether. A minimum of three positive votes for four-person committees and four positive votes for five-person committees is required. If the proposal is approved with changes, the specific changes will be communicated to the student by the Research Advisor(s) and/or committee members. **It is the student's responsibility to make the advised changes and resubmit the proposal with the changes clearly identified in a timely manner to the Research Advisor(s) or entire committee as agreed upon by the committee at the end of the proposal hearing.** If the proposal is disapproved, the members of the committee must explicitly identify in writing the additional work that needs to be completed by the candidate prior to a second review and defense.

Students are advised to prepare their materials to submit to the Internal Review Board (IRB) prior to their proposal hearing. Students will then submit their IRB materials, reflecting any changes asked for by the committee, to the IRB following proposal approval. Once the IRB has approved the proposed dissertation study, the student will submit the *Verification of Research Subject or Participant Compliance* form found on the Graduate School's website under Forms for Current Students. Students are cautioned not to undertake data collection procedures until the proposed study has been approved by the Internal Review Board when the methodology involves human subjects.

Dissertation Defense

When the research advisor(s) and the student believe the dissertation is ready for defense, the following steps must be taken.

1. In conjunction with the research committee, the doctoral candidate must arrange for the date, time, and place of the defense. The defense must occur at least five weeks (35 calendar days) before the intended graduation date.
2. At least three weeks (21 calendar days) before the scheduled defense, the Research Advisor must notify the Graduate School of the date, time, and place of the defense.
3. At least three weeks (21 calendar days) before the defense, the doctoral candidate must provide a completed copy of his/her dissertation to each member of the Doctoral Research Committee. The copies submitted must be in the form specified by the ELPS and the Graduate School.
4. The Graduate School will approve and publicize the defense date.

The dissertation defense is open to other faculty and graduate students. Other members of the ELPS Faculty and ELPS doctoral students are especially encouraged to attend. Once again, interested faculty or students should contact

the Research Advisor(s) or candidate before the hearing. All decisions on the acceptability of the dissertation are made by the student's Doctoral Research Committee.

The general format for the dissertation defense begins with the student making a 20-minute presentation of the study, particularly focusing on the methodology and findings. This is followed by questions and discussion among the committee members and the student. After the committee has completed their questions, the Research Chair opens the hearing to questions from others who are in attendance. When the committee is ready to make a decision, the Chair excuses the student and the gallery. Normally a dissertation defense hearing will last about two hours.

After the oral defense of the dissertation, the committee makes its decision on the acceptability of the dissertation and any necessary changes. The committee may decide to approve the dissertation as written, or request the candidate to make specific minor or major changes. A minimum of three out of four votes for a four-person committee and four out of five votes for a five-person committee is required for approval. The student is then invited to rejoin the committee and is to be informed by the advisor and/or committee members of the committee's decision.

If approved with minor changes, (e.g., spelling, typographical errors, syntactic errors), these changes must be outlined specifically in writing and given to the student. Once the candidate has made these changes, he/she must resubmit a corrected copy(ies) to either the chair and/or the entire committee depending on the wishes of his/her committee. If all changes have been judged adequate, then the Report of Defense of Dissertation form will be sent to the Graduate School. It is expected that the candidate will be able to make these minor changes within a three to five-day time period.

If major changes are needed, a second dissertation defense is scheduled at which time the Doctoral Research Committee members review and act on the revisions. These changes must be stated on "Report of Defense of Dissertation" form and submitted to the Graduate School. The changes required must be specifically outlined and include the amount of time that will be allowed for the revisions to be made. If the second defense is not satisfactory, a judgement of fail will be made and the student's program will be terminated.

Once all the corrections and changes have been made, the student shall submit an electronic copy of the dissertation and at least five original, signed copies of the signature page. For guidance on formatting the dissertation and submission requirements, download the *Doctoral Dissertation and Doctoral Capstone Format Manual* available on the Graduate School's website under Forms for Current Students.