

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN



College of Education Department of Educational Organization and Leadership Dissertation Direction, Advising, and Degree Completion Policy (for students and faculty)

This document is intended to supplement the Graduate College Handbook and Policies document and to provide guidance related to the doctoral advisement process. You are expected to consult the handbook for specific information related to the required steps of your program and your responsibilities at each stage. It may be accessed at: www.grad.uiuc.edu/gradhandbook/. At the same time, the Department of Educational Organization and Leadership has put in place some additional policies and guidelines to ensure that you make timely progress towards your degree. These are summarized in this document.

Each faculty member has idiosyncrasies that become apparent to students as work progresses on various research and writing projects. Your advisor or research supervisor generally sets the ground rules regarding work. If you intend to ask a faculty member to be a member of your committee, it is important that you determine from your advisor or research director how he or she would like you to proceed. Before we get into the details of the dissertation itself, please note the EOL policies regarding continuous enrollment and the petition information below.

Progress to Degree

Doctoral students in the Department of Educational Organization and Leadership (EOL) are required to make satisfactory progress to degree and to report their progress in an annual report. A departmental form is sent to all students via email during the spring term each year. As you complete and return this form, you should be aware that the department considers the following timeline a reasonable benchmark for determining adequate progress to degree:

- Completion of course work within three calendar years of the beginning of doctoral studies, recognizing full-time students may complete course work in shorter time and part-time students may take longer, although completion of all required course work for the doctoral degree should be possible for all EOL doctoral students within four years.
- Qualifying exams should be taken within one to two regular academic terms (excluding summers) after the completion of course work; most students prepare and sit for the exams within one regular academic term.
- The preliminary oral should be completed within approximately one year of the successful completion of qualifying exams.

- Completion of the doctoral dissertation and defense is dependent on the thesis focus and methods, but is typically completed within one to two years following the successful completion of the preliminary exam.

The entire timeline for doctoral students in the College of Education, Department of EOL, is seven years from the time of first enrollment to completion of the degree. Any proposed variation from this norm **MUST BE** discussed with your departmental advisor. Please note that students who are not deemed to be making adequate progress may be counseled to withdraw from the program.

Maintaining Continuous Enrollment

The Department of Educational Organization and Leadership requires that all doctoral students maintain continuous enrollment (fall & spring) after the completion of coursework, including the term of the qualifying exam, and for every term thereafter until you complete your final defense. If you need a CRN code to register in a thesis course, please contact your advisor.

When a Petition is Necessary

Sometimes students need to petition the college to make changes in coursework, curriculum, program, to request re-entry after a hiatus, and so forth. Information about petitions and forms may be found at www.grad.uiuc.edu/admissions/petition_instruct.cfm and www.grad.uiuc.edu/forms/gsas/petition_form.pdf

Please NOTE: Acceptance of a petition is not automatic and the department may opt to accept, accept with additional conditions, or refuse any petition.

Responsibilities related to the Dissertation

If you have any questions or problems related to your program, you should consult the appropriate person to assist with a resolution. In general, start with your advisor. If you cannot achieve a satisfactory resolution, please then go the department and consult the head, before taking any question outside the department. Only after attempts to get the necessary information or to resolve a problem have failed at the department level, should you go to the associate dean for graduate studies.

Advisor

Your assigned departmental advisor is the person to whom you should go for guidance about course selection, information about your program, and all other course related queries. When you have completed your course-work and your comprehensive exams, your advisor takes on a special role with respect to advising you of policies and procedures related to the completion of your dissertation. This is the focus of this document. At the same time, it is important to note that it is better not to wait until you have completed your coursework to select a dissertation topic and identify a committee. In fact, the earlier you are able to do this, the more your advisor will be able to guide you with respect to appropriate course choices and the more you may be able to target course assignments in relevant ways.

Both students and advisors have responsibilities related to the final phase of graduate study. Advisors' responsibilities include providing the best guidance they can to help you successfully complete your dissertation, keeping your file up-to-date, submitting the paperwork required to confirm your successful completion of program requirements, and advising you about whether the deadlines you have set for yourself are feasible and the likelihood that you will graduate when you hope to graduate.

Dissertation Director

In most cases, your departmental advisor will also be your dissertation director. On occasion, in order to ensure that your dissertation is directed by the person with the most expertise in a given area, your dissertation director may be another professor from either within or outside the department. In that case, you should keep your advisor informed of any changes in your intended dissertation timeline, but look to your dissertation director for all substantive issues related to the content and methods of your dissertation. The two should, of course, work quite closely together and it is appropriate to cc one when communicating with the other to ensure such communication occurs.

Students' responsibilities include keeping the advisor, director, and other members of your committee informed of your progress and any problems you encounter: following through on your approved proposal and seeking your committee's consent if you have to deviate from the proposal, being aware of deadlines for submitting your work to meet graduation requirements, maintaining continuous registration and applying for graduation by the published deadline, and ensuring that signed copies of your thesis or dissertation are submitted by the published deadline.

Communication Timelines and Timeliness

Discussing your timetable far in advance of the deadline is usually the best way to avoid disappointment and hardship. Every faculty member has commitments that take her/him away from the campus from time to time. It is important to discuss your plans so that you will not be disappointed when your advisor is unavailable at a critical time in your work. When you submit your work, please schedule an appointment to receive feedback. Be aware that faculty members are working with multiple students, and that immediate turnaround and feedback on your work is generally not possible, especially at exam time and near the end of term. Please check with your advisor/dissertation director about whether he or she prefers a PDF, word file, or a printed document.

Communication is a two-way street. Both faculty and students are responsible to ensure that communication and feedback are conducted in a respectful and timely fashion. In general, students should expect a response to an email communication or simple inquiry within three days. Feedback to a long written paper, draft proposal, or dissertation should normally be received within three weeks—unless a different timeline has been communicated by your advisor when you submit the document. Depending on the timing, shorter documents may take less time. NOTE: Often you may continue to make progress while awaiting feedback, so you should discuss with your dissertation director the best ways to continue to make progress.

Just as students expect timely feedback from professors, similarly when students indicate they will follow through within a certain timeframe, it is disrespectful not to do so without notifying the faculty advisor of a necessary change and renegotiating a new timeline. Please do not expect your advisor, dissertation director, or dissertation committee to give your work preferential and expedited treatment as the deadlines near for meeting graduation requirements. At this point, the workload of faculty members actually intensifies, because multiple students simultaneously are attempting to finish in time for graduation. In addition, faculty must take additional time when the final dissertation product is submitted for review, to ensure that the work is accurate and of the highest quality. If you feel you will be pressed for time as you approach the end of your program, please discuss your options with your advisor and dissertation director.

Forming and Working with Committees

All dissertation committees need to be comprised of at least four faculty members: three of whom must be members of the graduate faculty, two must be tenured, and at least one must be from outside the department. You should normally identify your dissertation director first (in most cases this will be the same person as your departmental advisor) and then consult with the director about the remaining committee members. Such decisions are based on their collective experience with the people involved, the research methodology you intend to use for your study, their ability to contribute to the study you intend to do, and their availability and willingness to serve.

In many cases, advisors will leave it to the student to contact potential committee members to determine if they are available and willing to serve. If you would like to invite someone to serve on your committee but would prefer that the director approach them, then please discuss this with your director and advisor.

A dissertation should demonstrate the writer's ability to conduct a formal piece of research. A formal piece of research is a project that has been developed and executed to explore one or more precise research questions using an established research methodology. A dissertation is evaluated using criteria that are normally applied to the kind of research carried out and the methodology employed. Because it is a formal piece of research, a dissertation is expected to contribute to an identifiable body of knowledge related to your broad field of education. The structure of a dissertation is typically quite predictable because it must always present the research questions of concern, an analysis of previous work related to the question, a complete description of the research methodology employed, a presentation of the "data" collected, a discussion of how the data were used to answer the research questions, and recommendations based on what was learned in the study.

Dissertation Proposals

Because a dissertation proposal is a plan to conduct a research study, there are essential elements that must be included. These elements are typically presented in three "chapters" or sections each of which, with minor modifications, will likely become a separate chapter in the final thesis. First, there must be an introduction that indicates the purpose of the study, the context of the study, the research questions or issues to be explored, the study's limitations

and delimitations, and its significance. Second, there must be a review of relevant literature including prior research studies on the same topic and any theoretical or conceptual literature that will inform the study. From this review there may be a conceptual, analytical or theoretical framework presented as part of the proposal. Third, there must be a detailed explanation of the research methodology to be employed including a step-by-step account of how you plan to proceed, a discussion of how you plan to establish the trustworthiness of any data collected, and the strengths and weakness of the methodology and how you plan to address the acknowledged weaknesses.

The Preliminary Oral

When you and your director feel that your proposal is ready to defend, you are responsible for getting the meeting set up, determining others' availability, and asking the EOL office personnel to book a room. You are responsible for printing your proposal and for insuring that copies of the written work to be reviewed are delivered to each committee member at least three weeks prior to the meeting.

NOTE: If the preliminary oral has not been passed before the seven year timeline expires, it is highly unlikely a petition for a time extension will be granted.

IRB Approval

Before you can schedule your preliminary oral defense, if you plan to conduct research using any human subjects, you must also have obtained IRB approval for your study. For this, you can find additional information and the appropriate forms at www.ed.uiuc.edu/ber/webpages/HumanSubjects.html

The following steps provide an overview of the thesis format review and approval process relative to your preparation of the thesis and completion of preliminary and final examinations. You should expect at least three submissions to the Thesis Format Checker during the process. For additional information, please visit the College of Education Thesis Format Web site at www.education.illinois.edu/saao/TFOAids.html

Preparation for preliminary exam.

See department secretary for exam procedures approximately four weeks prior to exam.

1. Obtain College of Education (COE) Thesis Format Information from Student Academic Affairs Office (SAAO) or Web site www.education.illinois.edu/saao/.
2. Download College of Education **APA Format** Template and use it as a guideline to format thesis/dissertation. EOL requires the use of APA Style for Doctoral dissertations.
3. Submit formatted thesis proposal (or chapters) for preliminary format review to SAAO room 120 Education Building.
4. Begin format review meetings with Thesis Format Checker at SAAO room 120 Education Building.

Take preliminary exam. Your committee will determine the outcome: pass, pass with some modifications required, make major modifications and hold a new defense, or fail.

Make any changes required by your committee in a timely manner (usually within three weeks) and be sure to submit any required changes to the IRB committee as well.

This is your dissertation, but your advisor and dissertation director have years of experience. If you disagree with a suggestion, please discuss it respectfully, but DO NOT simply ignore it. It's fine if you disagree, but it's not fine if you ignore considered advice!

Once you have passed the Preliminary Oral:

1. Collect your data
2. Analyze your data
3. Complete your thesis as agreed upon during the preliminary oral.
- 4. Begin preparation for final exam.** See department secretary for exam procedures approximately four weeks prior to exam.
 1. Submit a completed dissertation draft to SAAO for format review prior to final examination.
 2. Meet with Thesis Format Checker at SAAO room 120 Education Building to revise format changes.
 3. Download Certificate of Committee Approval form (CCA) from the Graduate College Thesis Office Web site at www.grad.uiuc.edu/thesis/.
 4. Submit your dissertation to your committee a minimum of three weeks in advance in your final approved format. (This is not a draft and should be carefully read for errors and typos).
 5. Complete and bring a minimum of three CCA forms and a hard copy of the dissertation to your exam.
 6. Take final exam and obtain signatures of all committee members on the CCA forms, if no changes are required.
 7. **Student prepares document for final format review.** Prepare final draft making all academic changes required by thesis committee members after final exam.
 8. Obtain signatures on CCA forms if have not done so previously.
 9. Submit signed CCA forms with final thesis draft to the EOL department for department head signature.
 10. Submit final draft with completed CCA forms to SAAO for final format review.
 11. SAAO issues department approval form.
 12. Deposit thesis at the Graduate College, 206 Coble Hall, M-F, 1-4:45 p.m.

Some Additional Considerations

Inclusive Language

It is acceptable to write in the first person in most cases and particularly necessary to do so if you are situating yourself as a participant or participant observer. Consult with your dissertation director if you have any questions. You should also use "inclusive" language and avoid language that reflects or perpetuates bias. If in doubt, consult the APA Manual (Table 1, beginning on page 54) or Miller, C. & Swift, K. (1988). *The handbook of nonsexist writing* (2nd ed.). New York: Harper and Row.

Presenting Drafts of Your Work

Students normally submit multiple drafts of their work to their dissertation director before he or she agrees it is ready for a defense. Dissertations are serious pieces of scholarly work; not only do they become public documents but they also represent you and the department permanently. You will not likely ever again have a piece of your work as thoroughly scrutinized. It can be extremely frustrating for students during this time of submitting and rewriting multiple drafts. However, please understand that it is the director's professional and ethical obligation to ensure that you have a high quality study. Therefore, it is important for you to follow your dissertation director's instructions carefully and to incorporate suggested changes into subsequent drafts; her/his feedback is intended to ensure that your work is of the highest quality and that it ultimately will be judged acceptable by your dissertation committee.

Use your word processor's spell checker on all drafts but do not rely on it to catch all errors. Sum words are fond in the dictionary butt they art the wrong words! A spill checker well oily flag worlds that ore spilled incorrectly; it wont flag worlds that are wrong!

Drafts of your work should reflect careful attention to detail. It is not your advisor's or your dissertation director's responsibility to be your copy editor, nor is it their responsibility to be your APA expert.

Getting Ready To Graduate

As you near the end of your program there are several administrative matters that will need attention. *It is up to you* to be aware of the deadlines for completing papers, theses, and dissertations. These dates are published on the Graduate College Web site and details of your responsibilities are outlined both in the graduate college handbook and on the EOL Web site. Congratulations. We hope you have a rewarding and successful experience.