

**School of Social Work**  
**University of Texas at Arlington**  
Guidelines for the Research Publication Dissertation Format

**I. Introduction**

The dissertation is a coherent body of work; however, the student writes a minimum of three articles suitable for publication in peer-reviewed journals. All Research Publication Dissertations require prior approval of the student's specialty committee, dissertation committee and Ph.D. Program Director. All three scholarly papers should represent work undertaken while the student is enrolled in the PhD program.

**II. Number and Nature of Articles**

1. The student will write a *minimum* of 3 articles under the Research Publication Dissertation format. Each article is treated as a separate chapter, i.e., they will comprise Chapters 2, 3, and 4 of the dissertation
2. The articles should form a cohesive body of work that supports a theme or themes that are expressed clearly in the introduction to the dissertation (Chapter 1).
3. Articles are submitted to journals following the style requirements of those particular journals.
4. Manuscripts submitted and accepted for publication by a journal does not constitute acceptance or approval of the manuscript as part of the dissertation by the advisory committee. It is the responsibility of the examining committee to determine if a manuscript fully meets degree requirements for the dissertation.

**III. Journals**

1. Journals must be approved by the dissertation committee. Serving as an "editorial board" for the student, the committee will help select journals that will challenge the student and offer a reasonable chance of publication success.
2. Articles must be ready for submission prior to the dissertation defense and should be submitted as soon as possible following the defense, once any changes suggested by the committee at the defense are made. One article may be submitted following the completion of the specialty exam and prior to the dissertation defense.

#### **IV. Authorship**

1. Students must be sole author or first author on all articles. One article may be co-authored with the committee chair and/or committee members. Authorship must be negotiated and agreed upon in writing as part of the completed dissertation proposal. Any subsequent changes in co-authorship must be approved by all members of the student's dissertation committee in writing.
2. To avoid conflicts of interest, any co-authors who are members of the student's dissertation committee must recuse themselves from judging articles carrying their name. In these cases, two additional faculty members chosen by the Ph.D. Program Director will, prior to the defense and in concert with those committee members who are not co-authors, determine the suitability of the article(s) in question.

#### **V. Organization of the Dissertation**

1. The dissertation must include an abstract that synthesizes the articles, as well as an introduction (Chapter 1) and a conclusion (Chapter 5).
2. The introduction (Chapter 1) should include:
  - a. A definition or statement of the problem.
  - b. A rationale for the dissertation as a whole is provided
  - b. The importance of the problem, i.e., why it is worth researching, why it matters to the field of social work.
  - c. The theoretical foundation(s) supporting the problem/issue.
  - d. An overview of the important literature (overview, because each article submitted for the 3 article format will have its own unique literature review).
  - e. The research questions.
  - f. The methodology to be used to answer those questions.
3. **Article chapters** (chapter 2, 3, and 4).

One article should be a systematic review of existing research on the substantive topic or on an article based on a theoretical or policy approach to the substantive topic. The other two articles should be empirical research based on data analyzed by the student as part of the dissertation process.

4. **Conclusion.** (Chapter 5) will summarize the dissertation's major findings, discussion, and recommendations. The student will also present and discuss linkages (i.e., similarities and differences, themes or patterns) between the separate manuscripts that are included in the dissertation, striving as much as possible to present the document as representative of a coherent body of work.
  - a. Synthesis of the main findings of the full dissertation including the findings reported in the manuscripts.

- b. Strengths and limitations of the dissertation are provided.
- c. General conclusions and implications for practice and future research are provided.

*Note:* The dissertation will be formatted and bound consistent with School of Social Work guidelines. Students must secure all copyright permissions before finalizing the proposal and the dissertation. Some journals might have copyright peculiarities that make it difficult to include in a dissertation. All of these issues should be considered early on in the process.

*Note:* Exceptions to policies about dissertation chapters can be approved by the PhD Program Director and the PhD Program Committee.

## **VI. Dissertation Proposal and Defense Procedures**

1. Research Publication Dissertations will be subject to a proposal and dissertation defense procedures as specified by program policy.

2. Dissertation Proposal:

- a. The introductory chapter.
- b. Copy of any completed article.
- c. An outline of any article in progress.
- d. A list of proposed journals.
- e. A timeline for completion of the work.
- f. IRB approval and research procedures, if required.

3. Dissertation Defense

- a. After the dissertation committee approves all sections of the dissertation and the three scholarly papers have been determined to be appropriate for publication in refereed journals, the student may schedule their dissertation defense.
- b. The defense is a formal meeting between the student and dissertation committee. The student is responsible for giving an oral presentation of their full dissertation. The student is expected to clearly and professionally articulate the rationale and purpose of the dissertation. The student also should describe the methodology and interpret the results, identify limitations, and discuss recommendations from the research. The student should identify areas for future research and articulate a personal research agenda that builds upon the dissertation. The student should also articulate feedback he or she may have received from journal editorial reviews and describe in detail how he or she has responded to this feedback.
- c. The dissertation committee is responsible for challenging the student to defend their choices and conclusions, testing the student's knowledge about the topic, and confirming that the student is well-positioned to meet the stated research goals.
- d. Similar to other dissertation defenses, the defense is open to the public. All visitors and members of the dissertation committee will be present for the oral presentation.

## **Final Dissertation Outline**

I. Cover Page

II. Table of Contents

III. Abstract

IV. Chapter 1: Introduction - Statement of the Problem

- Significance: Importance of Problem Using Empirical Research
- Innovation Statements (how your work moves the field forward vertically)
- End with Research Questions/Aims of Each Study and How They Will Address
- Important Gaps in the Literature and Form a Cohesive Body of Work

V. Chapter 2: Literature Review/Systematic Review or an Article based on a Theoretical or Policy Approach to the Substantive Topic Framework

- This article can have been submitted for publication; Committee will determine if it meets requirements for dissertation
- If article not submitted; Targeted journal identified
- Article in format of targeted journal

VI. Chapter 3: Empirical Article

- Article in Final Submission Format to be published after dissertation defense
- Targeted journal identified
- Article in format of targeted journal

VII. Chapter 4: Empirical Article

- Article in Final Submission Format to be published after dissertation defense
- Targeted journal identified
- Article in format of targeted journal

VII. Chapter 5: Conclusion/Discussion

- Discuss the Scholarly Work Completed and the Implications for the Field More Broadly; this should include a discussion about how the papers go together, how they form a cohesive contribution to the literature.
- Discuss Limitations of the Scholarly Work Completed
- Discuss Recommendations for Social Work Research, Practice and Policy (and/or Related Fields)

VIII. References: Each dissertation chapter will also have its own reference list.