

RES 990: Dissertation Project (8 credits, 52 weeks)

Akamai University

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course governs the conduct of the dissertation project for the Doctoral level student. The dissertation is a major undertaking that is a demonstration of mastery of a field of study and an original contribution to the field. Usually more than 150 pages in length the final project may take any of several forms, depending upon the field of study and the expectations of faculty. This may be quantitative or qualitative research or participatory action research. Doctoral students may re-enroll for this course for no-credit as needed.

PREREQUISITES

Completion of RES 985 Dissertation Proposal and required credits of coursework including major and minor fields of study and research preparation.

COURSE TOPICS

- Standard Requirements of a Dissertation
- Parts of a Doctoral Dissertation, Front Matter, Text and End Matter
- Writing the Introduction, or Basis for the Study, or Orientation to the Problem
- Defining the Problem Statement
- Writing the Hypotheses or Questions
- Writing the Review of the Literature (building a case for the need for the study)
- Articulating the Study Design
- Preparing Tables and Figures
- Drawing Conclusions
- Writing the Implications and Suggestions for Further Research
- Compiling the Appendices and Reference List
- Completing the Preliminary Pages or Front Matter
- Binding and Finishing Activities

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this course, students will have written a doctoral dissertation of a study, which contributes to the literature in a selected field of study.

The candidate will have:

1. Defined the Problem Statement
2. Expanded the Review of the Literature from the proposal statement, which includes a review of doctoral dissertation research available on the topic
3. Clearly designed and developed the appropriate methodology for the study.
4. Discussed the sample and sampling process
5. Developed any instrumentation or interview schedules
6. Test for reliability and validity
7. Appropriately treated the data

8. Drawn conclusions from the findings of the study
9. Set out a section on further directions for research
10. Completed all end matter
11. Completed all Front Matter or Preliminary Pages
12. Written an approved doctoral dissertation that is ready for binding

REQUIRED STUDY MATERIALS

Notes on Standards for Writing Theses and Dissertations

AND

Sample Pages of Elements of Theses and Dissertations

Compiled by Dr. LaWanna L. Blount Akamai University (handouts from Mentor)

To Accompany:

Carol Slade, FORM AND STYLE, Research Papers, Reports, Term Papers. Houghton Mifflin, 2003. (12th edition) Or the 11th edition, 2000. This is the dissertation standard manual adopted by the university. There are standard referencing styles in the back of this manual (APA, MLA, Chicago).

For Referencing (these are complete manuals and are optional)

American Psychological Association, Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, Washington, DC. 5th Edition

OR

Turbián, Kate L., A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations, University of Chicago Press, (any recent edition).

RECOMMENDED STUDY MATERIALS

NOTE: These recommended materials will change depending upon the discipline

Babbie, Earl R., *Survey Research Methods*, Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, (any edition).

Burgess, Robert G. (Ed.), *Strategies of Educational Research*, Philadelphia: Falmer Press, 1985.

Cresswell, John, *Research Design, Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Method Approaches*, Sage Publications: Thousand Oaks, 2002.

Davis, Gordon B., and Clyde A. Parker, *Writing the Doctoral Dissertation: A Systematic Approach*, Barrons Education Series, New York: Woodbury, Second Edition, 1997.

Fox, David J., *The Research Process in Education*, New York: Rinehart and Winston Inc., (any edition).

Kerlinger, Fred N. *Foundations of Behavioral Research*, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., (any edition).

Merriam, Sharan B., *Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications in Education*, San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 1998.

Sax, Gilbert, *Foundations of Educational Research*, Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, (any edition).

NOTE: There are many other excellent research methodology books available. Check with your local library, the Akamai Virtual library, and Questia Media library.

ASSIGNMENTS

Assignment #1

Review other theses or dissertations in your topical field. Note how they are integrally linked together and how the topical subheadings form a framework for the text. You can order dissertations from University Microfilms at Ann Arbor, Michigan. Go to <http://wwwlib.umi.com/dissertations/search> and do a search of the abstracts in your topical field of study. You can use these for your literature review. To order the dissertation you can call the telephone number listed or order on line.

Contact your instructor and discuss the timeline of assignments. The writing of your doctoral dissertation will take you some time, depending on your design of the study and the methodology you are using.

Write a draft of your Chapter One. Please note that the preliminary pages should be written after the text end matter is completed. Your Chapter One should start with an Introduction and be titled Introduction OR Bases for the Investigation OR Foundations of the Problem, OR Orientation to the Problem.

These pages set the scene for your study. The Review of the Literature usually follows. You must have included in your Review of the Literature, a review and discussion of other theses or dissertations in your subject area, pointing out that no other dissertation research has been completed on your specific problem investigated. Dissertation research is cumulative and specific research must be linked to other dissertation research in the topic. No other dissertation research completed in the area strengthens the case for your investigation.

Then, you need a section leading to the Problem Statement, and a statement of the Significance of the Study. Each chapter closes with a summary and a statement setting out what the next chapter will comprise... e.g. "This concludes chapter one. In this chapter ... " Sum up... the contents of the chapter. Then go on to say " In Chapter Two, the design of the study is discussed and the procedures for collecting and analyzing the data..." etc...

Send the draft to your committee members by email attachment and receive feedback to improve the text. Modify your chapter incorporating the suggestions/comments that have

been given by the mentors and re-send the modified Chapter One to committee members for approval.

Assignment #2

Chapter Two is normally titled THE DESIGN OF THE STUDY, or this may be Chapter Three depending on the type of research project and your Chapter One. In this chapter you discuss in detail all the basic components of the research design and the procedures in collecting and analyzing the data utilized in your study.

You begin with the Problem that you have investigated, write your hypotheses or the basic questions and your definition of terms. The instrumentation section is comprised of the development of the instrument and sample items can be included in the text of the chapter. The complete instrument with the directions for completion is included in the Appendix. References can be made to the instrument and footnoted. Your instrument should be titled and the first time you refer to it in the text you state the complete name. For all further references you can use the initials of each word of the title. E.g. Leadership Action Questionnaire and state “hereafter referred to as the LAQ”.

You also describe how the instrument was tested for validity and reliability and specifically state what modifications were made after the testing process.

You describe your population and sample, the collection of data and how the data was treated. Also, you discuss the conditions affecting the data interpretation.

If you have qualitative data and you used data that already exists, from books, journals or reports, you should discuss these sources as sources of data instead of the Instrumentation section.

You then summarize the chapter and point to what is included in Chapter Three. Send your draft Chapter Two to your committee members by email attachment for feedback. Then, working from the suggestions improve your Chapter until it is of a satisfactory standard. If requested by mentors make the modifications and resend to mentors for final approval or other suggestions.

Assignment # 3

Chapter Three or Four. This chapter is titled the ANALYSES of THE DATA. This chapter contains the tables and charts of the organization of the data. The tables are used to illustrate and summarize the data. See your handout material “Notes on Standards for Writing Theses and Dissertations” on pages 8 and 9. If you have problems with setting up tables let your instructor know as we have material on constructing tables.

Draw out the findings from the study referring to the tables by number and title. This is not the place to draw conclusions from your study. Send a draft to your primary mentor via email attachment for feedback and then revise incorporating suggestions of instructor to members of the committee.

Assignment #4

This is the final Chapter, titled SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter you review the background and conceptual framework of the study, the methodology, and the analyses to link the parts of the study to the research problem.

Then state the conclusions of your study and make generalizations, draw out implications and make recommendations. Also, state the recommendations/ directions for further research. You are to clearly distinguish between the conclusions, the generalizations, implications and/or recommendations by subheadings in this chapter. Write a draft and send to your committee by email attachment for feedback. Work to revise the chapter incorporating the suggestions of your committee members for final submission.

Assignment #5

This is the End Matter section of your dissertation. In this assignment you will:

Write your Reference List, as consistent with the APA, MLA, or Chicago Style (whichever style you have selected). Consistency of style throughout the text in referencing is an important part of your dissertation. The most important is that the Reference List is consistent with one style throughout.

Organize your Appendices which you should have done as you were working through the Chapters Two, Three and Four. See your handout on “Notes on “Standards for Writing Theses and Dissertations” on pages 6, and 7, Appendices. Organize your appendices, with half title pages between each and titles of Appendix A... etc. Check to see that these materials, which are, referred to in the text state the correct page. On the very last page of the dissertation/thesis you place a short biographical sketch, of one-two paragraphs. The biographical sketch consists of a concise statement of where you work, other degrees held, other universities attended, professional associations affiliated with, and your major and minor area of study.

Send your Reference List and Appendices to your mentors for review and feedback. Work on those suggestions for your final submission.

Assignment #6

In this assignment, you will now complete your Front Matter or Preliminary pages and place them in the correct order in your Thesis or Dissertation. The Preliminaries include the following components: abstract; human subject approval form (if necessary), title page, copyright page, table of contents, lists of tables and figures, See the instructions for formatting on pages 3-5 of the handout “Notes On Standards For Writing Theses and Dissertations” and “Sample Pages “14-25.

Follow these instructions on the above-cited pages carefully. When you have completed this send the Front Matter to your mentors for comment and feedback. Incorporate the suggestions and re send to be approved. Finally, after the Preliminary pages have been approved, paginate them and paginate the total dissertation.

Now proof the total Thesis/dissertation and re send to your Mentors
The three members of your Committee (and the Center Director) must approve your final work on your dissertation. .

You are now ready to send your dissertation to head office and wait for approval and the finishing activities, which include binding of the dissertation. All three members of your Committee should receive a hard copy of your final dissertation. It is your choice whether to send a bound copy to your committee members. However, two bound copies are to be sent to head office.

FACULTY-STUDENT COMMUNICATIONS

Telephone Contacts

Candidates will contact their Primary Mentor within one week of the enrollment of the course. This initial contact will help permit the transmission of clear expectations for completion of course requirements. Periodic telephone interaction required course materials, mailings, and postage to be at student's expense throughout the duration of the course.

Email communication

Frequent email communication between student and mentors should be initiated and sustained for the duration of the course.

Alternative Communications

Candidates may initiate and send communications or materials via postal service as appropriate.

Suggested Timeline

Students should schedule completion of Assignment #1 during the first week. Each assignment should be completed on a timely basis with completion of Assignment # 6 during or before the final or 52nd week. The entire eight credit hour course should be completed and graded by the end of 52 weeks. Students can request an extension of the course in writing to the primary mentor.

GRADING ASSIGNMENTS [Total Points: 200]

Assignment #1 (30 Points)

Draft Review of Chapter One, Introduction and Review of the Literature, Grade is based on How well the Introduction as setting the scene for the investigation, the quality and comprehensiveness of Literature Review, inclusion and clarity of doctoral dissertation research linkage in building the case for the study. Student grade based on the implementation of suggestions provided by Mentors to modify and/or expand chapter text.

Assignment #2 (40 points)

Chapter Two or Three, Design of the Study, Student Grade based on how well the draft manuscript comprises a discussion of the components of the design and methodology and the extent to which the student incorporates the suggestions of the mentors after the first draft.

Assignment #3 (40 points)

Chapter Three or Four, Analysis of The Data, Student grade is based on how well tables, charts are constructed, titled and numbered, and are self-explanatory. Also discussion of tables in text are completed without having to read the tables. Student grade is also based on the extent to which the student incorporates the suggestions of the mentors after the first draft.

Assignment #4. (30 Points)

Chapter Four, Summary and Conclusions. Student grade based on how well summary is drawn out and conclusions are formulated. and chapter is concluded and implications or recommendations and /or further research are written. Grade is also based on the extent to which student incorporates the suggestions and modifications of the mentors.

Assignment #5 (30 Points)

End Matter of Dissertation. Student grade based on consistency of referencing style, appendices and total formatting of end matter.

Assignment #6 (30 points)

Preliminary Pages. Student grade based on how well student has followed directions in formatting the front matter section and all components are included in the front matter and front matter and text section paging is correct.

SUGGESTED TIMELINE

Assignment #1: Chapter One to be completed by end of Month 1

Assignment #2: Chapter Two to be completed by end of Month 3

Assignment #3: Chapter Three to be completed by end of Month 6

Assignment #4: Chapter Four to be completed by end of Month 8

Assignment #5: End Matters to be completed by end of Month 10

Assignment #6: Preliminaries, paging and proofing to be completed by end of Month 12

CONTACT INFORMATION OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS

This information will be provided to the student by the Committee Chair or Center Director at the beginning of the Degree Program.

