

DISSERTATION GUIDELINES

Doctor of Education

2023 – 2024



DALLAS
THEOLOGICAL
SEMINARY

Preface

*“To know wisdom and instruction, to understand words of insight,
to receive instruction in wise dealing, in righteousness, justice, and equity;
to give prudence to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the youth—
Let the wise hear and increase in learning, and the one who understands obtain guidance,
to understand a proverb and a saying, the words of the wise and their riddles.*

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.”
Proverbs 1:2-7 ESV

The dissertation allows the doctoral candidate to demonstrate a thorough understanding of the research and writing process expected at the doctoral level at DTS. The dissertation process is straightforward and simple, yet the work required to do it well demands that the student be diligent to demonstrate a high level of research and writing competence. Candidates must focus their research question, master the relevant literature, conceptualize & design an appropriate research methodology based on the research question and literature, clearly communicate findings, then apply the results in Christian educational settings.

This dissertation guidelines handbook is provided to you to help you navigate the details of writing your dissertation and thus completing this final phase of your doctoral studies. You are responsible as an EdD student to be aware of these guidelines and follow these guidelines as you write your dissertation. Please note that not all examples of APA writing standards have been included in this guideline, but representative examples have been included for your assistance. The APA, 7th edition provides a fuller explanation of writing requirements. Please refer to it if your question is not answered in this document.

If you internalize the steps outlined in this handbook and apply them in your dissertation work, you will have accomplished the aims of the dissertation, and prepared yourself for a lifetime of educational impact as you apply these same principles to future educational needs, opportunities and practices.

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General Information

Introduction

Candidates for the EdD program at Dallas Theological Seminary (DTS) must conduct an original research project under the guidance of DTS faculty. The research project must contribute to the theory or practice of formal education within the context of Christian education. This research must demonstrate mastery of relevant literature related to the selected topic and utilization of appropriate research methodology for the project. This exercise is designed to help the candidates step into the professional academic arena with the confidence they know how to do doctoral-level research and academic writing that will have impact in the world of formal Christian education.

This *DTS Dissertation Guidelines Handbook* summarizes information related to organizing your dissertation committee and navigating the logistics of completing your dissertation. It also addresses key points of information you will need to understand to successfully write your dissertation. Regarding this latter issue, it is not meant to be a substitute for the *APA Manual* guide. Please consult and utilize the *APA Manual Seventh Edition* with questions pertaining to writing your dissertation.

Dissertation Committee Members

The student's dissertation will be evaluated by three faculty committee members – the Chair serves as the dissertation Professor of Record; the first reader provides subject matter expertise; the second reader provides additional subject matter expertise. In addition to this committee, a form reader will check for proper APA formatting for the project.

Students are encouraged to begin the committee development process during their coursework portion of their studies. Consider your topic. Discuss this topic with DTS faculty members who have expertise and backgrounds related to your area of interest.

During the Research Development Seminar (ED7240), students will formalize the selection of their dissertation committee with the *Dissertation Reader Request Form* (See Appendixes). Once completed, this form should be submitted to the EdD office for review and approval.

In consultation with the EdD committee, the director of Doctor of Education studies approves the three faculty readers based on the student's topic and faculty availability. The Chair/Professor of Record assumes the responsibility of directing the entire project and is the one with whom the student will have regular contact during the project. The first and second readers provide necessary input at different stages of the dissertation process. The form reader addresses APA formatting needs at set junctures.

Dissertation Requirements, Deadlines, and Registration

Requirements:

The dissertation will be a five-chapter document built in stages as outlined below. Deadlines have been set as mile-markers to help the candidate pace the research project. Dissertations are 9-hour projects designed to be implemented over three consecutive semesters. Ideally the candidate will complete comprehensive exams in the fall or spring and then begin the dissertation process in either the spring or summer academic session.

Procedures:

Candidates should work with their Chair to meet the following mile marker steps towards dissertation completion.

Dissertation Steps	Timeframe
Prospectus	Developed During ED7240
Proposal (Chapters 1 – 3)	Written During ED7250-1
Defend Proposal	Successfully defend before collecting data and writing chapters 4 & 5
Gather Research / Write Chapters 4 & 5	ED7250-2 and ED7250-3
Defend Dissertation	

Registration

Students can register for ED7250-1 once they have defended their prospectus and completed their comprehensive exams. These two accomplishments allow the students to be admitted to candidacy. Registration for ED7250-1, -2, and -3 are done through the EdD office. Students will complete the *ED7250 Registration Request Form* (See Appendices) and submit it to the EdD office at edd@dts.edu for initial registration. The EdD office will then complete the registration process for the student with the Registrar’s office.

Since the dissertation is a nine-hour requirement, students will be automatically registered for three hours in each of the subsequent semesters. Students are advised to register for ED7250-1 no sooner than one year before the anticipated graduation date. If the dissertation is not completed within the first year after registering for ED7250, the student will automatically be registered for ED7260 and charged a one-credit hour dissertation continuation fee each fall and spring semester until the dissertation is completed.

Prospectus

During the ED7240 Research Development Seminar, students will develop a preliminary plan for the research topic. This plan is called the Prospectus. This document is a summary (20 pages) of the first three chapters of the dissertation. This preliminary plan must be approved by the student’s adviser, second reader, and methodology reader before proceeding. The prospectus is normally completed in conjunction with the timing of comprehensive exams. Specific guidance for this document will be provided during ED7240.

Proposal

During ED7250-1, in consultation with their Chair, students will write their Proposal (chapters one through three of the dissertation) Once the Chair and student believe the proposal is ready to be defended, the Chair will convene a meeting of the student’s dissertation committee where the student will defend the proposal. Once the proposal is successfully defended, the student may commence gathering data and moving forward with chapters four and five of the dissertation.

Gathering Data

Upon successful defense of their proposal and approval from the Institutional Review Board (see below), students may begin collecting data as explained in their proposal.

Institutional Review Board

As part of the research project, students will be required to ensure the protection of the rights of their research subjects. This is done through the Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness' Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB is charged with ethically protecting the rights and welfare of all human subjects in any research conducted under the sponsorship of Dallas Theological Seminary. During the proposal stage (ED7250-1), students will complete forms that describe the process to be followed to ensure the rights and welfare of research subjects.

Dissertation Defense

After students have collected their data and finished writing all five chapters and submitted their final draft, they will defend their dissertation before their committee. If students pass this defense, they will have completed the requirements for the dissertation. The Chair will work with the student to determine when the dissertation is ready to be defended.

Major Sections of the Dissertation

The Doctor of Education program at DTS requires a five-chapter dissertation. Each chapter has its own role and purpose for communicating the reason for, methodology of and findings from the research project. Each chapter is explained in summary fashion below.

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Research

In chapter one, the researcher explains the topic or problem of the study and its importance. The research question is clearly stated and explained. Key terms are defined. Assumptions and limitations of the study are clarified. Finally, a summary and overview of the dissertation is given.

Chapter 2: Literature Review (Including Biblical and Theological Foundation)

In chapter two, the researcher reviews the relevant literature on the selected topic. This review of the literature includes a biblical and theological perspective on the subject at hand. Not every possible source that could be used must be used in the literature review, and the sources that are used are not to be listed just in annotated fashion. The candidate must demonstrate a mastery of the literature that has come before and how these sources interact with one another to form the argument on the research topic to date. This chapter allows the candidate to demonstrate how the selected research project contributes to the literature or fills a gap in the literature that has come before. A chapter summary is provided at the end.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

In chapter three, the candidate outlines and explains the research methodology. The research question and research design should be explained more fully. Topics to be addressed include population and sample selection process, demographic and interview questions (Qualitative

research), hypotheses (Quantitative research), data collection and data analysis procedures, etc. A chapter summary should be included.

Chapter 4: Research Findings

In chapter 4, the researcher presents the findings from the research project. A description of the demographics of the study should be presented. In a qualitative project emerging themes will be addressed. In a quantitative project, hypotheses analysis will be presented. Tables and figures are helpful in illustrating the findings in summary fashion. A chapter summary is included.

Chapter 5: Research Discussion and Implications

In chapter 5, the researcher provides a summary of the entire research project and then presents its major conclusions. A discussion of the major findings should be presented in an orderly fashion which then builds to implications for educational practices. Address any limitations of the study and then make suggestions for future research.

Appendices

Your appendices section will include all the major supporting documents you used in your study. These include but are not limited to the following: survey instrument, interview questions, materials related to sample selection, materials related to data collection procedures, consent forms, copyright permissions, etc. Each category of materials has its own appendices section labeled A, B, C, etc.

References

Your reference section includes resources you used in your study in proper APA format.

Writing Guidelines

General Formatting

- Times New Roman font and 12-point type are utilized.
- Dissertations have 1” top, bottom, and right margins.
- Dissertations have 1.5” left margins to allow for binding.
- Dissertations are double-spaced.
- Page numbers appear in the right corner of the header, beginning with the title page of the paper (included in pagination, page i, but no page number printed).
- Pages prior to the body are numbered with lowercase Roman numerals (i, ii, iii, etc.)
- APA’s Running Head is *not* utilized.

Headings

The dissertation must be formatted in an orderly outlined fashion as explained below:

- Headings designate different levels of hierarchy and structure within the paper.
- Levels 3, 4, and 5 are included in line with the text and are not featured on a separate line.
- You are not allowed to have only one subsection within a section. The researcher must rephrase or and/or reorganize to either add sections or eliminate the one section all together.
- Five levels of heading may be used (though not required).

Heading Level	Format
1	Centered, Boldface, Uppercase and Lowercase Heading
2	Flush left, Boldface, Uppercase and Lowercase Heading
3	Indented, boldface, lowercase paragraph heading ending with a period.
4	<i>Indented, italicized, lowercase, boldface paragraph heading ending with a period.</i>
5	<i>Indented, italicized, lowercase paragraph heading ending with a period.</i>

Dissertation Contents Summary

The candidate's dissertation will have the following elements. Examples are provided in the appendices:

- Title Page
- Approval Page
- Dedication Page
- Acknowledgements Page
- Table of Contents
- List Page(s) for Abbreviations, Tables, and Figures
- Dissertation Abstract Page
- Body of Text
- Appendices
- Reference List

Citations

APA formatting is different than Turabian (used at the master's level at DTS). The following are brief examples of citations.

In-Text Citations

- All paraphrased or direct quote resources are cited in-text with a parenthetical reference (as opposed to a footnote). Each reference has a corresponding entry in the reference list at the end of the dissertation.
- In-text references utilize an author-date citation format. The surname of the author is used and the year of publication of the resource.
- When using a direct quote, include the page number also.

Sample One

Purposive sampling is a method, which focuses “on concrete cases and what these can contribute to the knowledge in the study...the point of reference is not so much the developing theory (as in theoretical sampling), but the gain of insights in the field or about the issue under study expected from specific participants (or groups) provided by them” (Flick, 2018, p. 182).

Sample Two

Statistics support this truth revealing that 85 percent of all people who accept Christ do so before the age of 18 (Fleischmann, 2010).

Direct Quotations

- When using a direct quote, incorporate it into a sentence or provide a brief attributing phrase to give the quote context.
- Direct quotes of fewer than 40 words are incorporated directly into the text. Enclose the quote with double quotation marks, and cite with the author, year, and page number. The period is placed AFTER the final parenthesis of the citation.
- Quotes that are longer than 40 words are placed in a block paragraph with no quotation marks and are cited with the author, year, and page number. Indent each line of a block quote. Place a period BEFORE the parenthetical citation.

Example of a Direct Quotation

Creswell defines interviewing as one of the “four basic types of information: observations (ranging from nonparticipant to participant, interviews (ranging from close-ended to open-ended), documents (ranging from private to public), and audiovisual materials (including materials such as photographs, compact discs, and videotapes)” (Creswell, 2007, p. 129).

Example of a Block Quotation

According to a study by Amy Miller and Brooklyn Mills at the University of Southern Mississippi:

Millennials have also typically grown up experiencing highly scheduled and monitored involvement in organized social activities, alongside schooling that was assessment-driven, marked by explicitly given measurement “goals” and rubrics to fulfill. As a result of their upbringing, Millennial college students arrive accustomed to a high level of guidance on educational expectations, considerable oversight of their daily behaviors, and a sense they are to be “sheltered” from threats. They also experience technology as “a natural part of their lives” and expect both social organizations and learning environments to integrate technology into day-to-day life and work. (Miller and Mills, 2019, p. __)

Tables and Figures

The following are brief examples of tables and figures.

- Use tables for reporting raw data, statistical findings, and displaying textual lists.
- Use figures for charts, graphs, etc.
- Choose the table or figure that works best for your study. Be consistent and don't use different styles just to be creative. Keep tables and figures simple. (See APA manual)

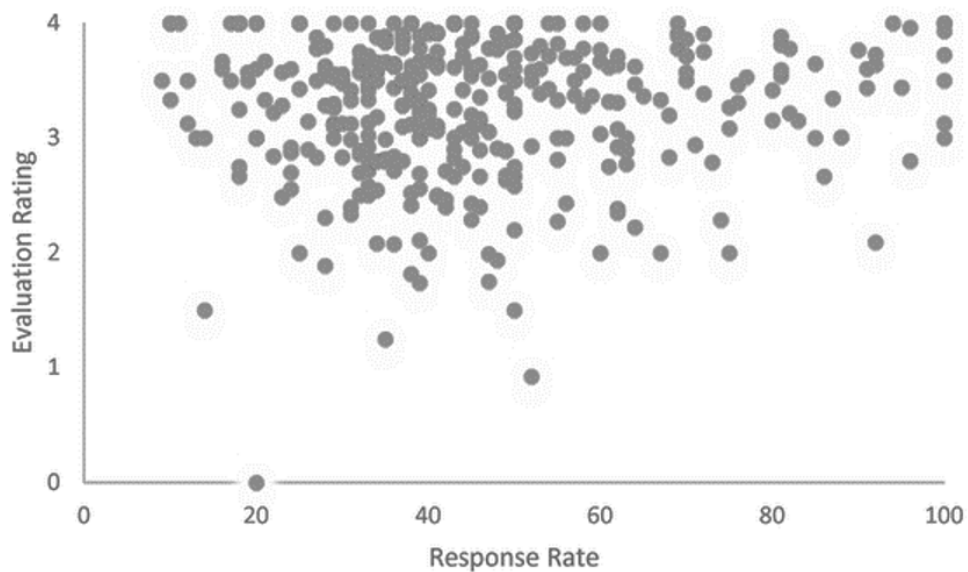
Example of a Table

Theme	Categories
Character of Intentional Relationships - 3 sources - 14 references	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Available - in-person 2. Mature – stable - trustworthy - selfless 3. Attentive – listens – asks questions - cares 4. Extra Classes ~ 3 sources, 6 references
Outcomes of Intentional Relationships - 3 sources - 13 references	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Accountability 2. Motivation 3. Encouragement 4. Feeling loved, understood, heard, valued, cared for
Hinderances to Intentional Relationships - 3 sources - 5 references	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Social media 2. Unmet expectations 3. Lack of knowledge of what’s available
Opportunities for Universities - 3 sources - 4 references	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Student-Professor relationships 2. Counseling centers 3. University sponsored student activities 4. External groups

Example of a Figure

Figure 1

Scatterplot Depicting the Correlation Between Response Rates and Evaluation Ratings



Note. Evaluation ratings were made during the 2014 fall academic term.

Placement in the Document

- Tables and figures must fit within the page margins of the document. This means they should not overhang the text on the left of the page or go beyond the alignment of the page number at the top right corner of the page. Font size should remain at 12-point Times New Roman (with the exception of 10-point font for chart labels). If a table or figure cannot fit within the page margins while maintaining font size, it should be redesigned.
- If space permits, finish a text paragraph where the table or figure is first referenced and place the table or figure immediately following. Otherwise, finish the line of text containing the sentence that introduces the table, place the table or figure in the text, and resume the paragraph.
- If a table or figure is less than one full page and there is not room for it on the page, continue the text to the bottom of the page and put the table or figure at the top of the next page. In many cases, this location will be the middle of another paragraph. However, do not shift the table into a section with a new subheading. In those cases, it is preferable to leave a gap at the bottom of a page or to potentially split a table.
- If additional tables or figures have been referenced in continued text, the series of tables and/or figures follow at the top of the next page. In some cases, raw data may be presented most beneficially as an appendix.
- Two blank lines separate a table or figure from the text, table, or figure above and below it.

Reference List

- The title REFERENCES is centered at the top of the page. Use all CAPS.

- References are alphabetized and listed in APA format (see 7th edition of the APA Manual).
- Entries are alphabetized and use a hanging-indent (first line flush with left margin; following lines indented).
 - All lines of an entry are single-spaced.
 - Use double spacing to separate entries.
 - References are systematically ordered as follows:
 - Surname
 - First initial
 - Chronological order of publication (start with oldest)
- Books, book chapters and articles use sentence formatting for titles:
 - Capitalize the first word of titles and subtitles, proper nouns, and first word after a colon.
 - Titles of journals use title case with all major words capitalized.
- Basic formats include books, book chapters, and journal articles:
 - Books:
Author(s). (Year of Publication). *Title of book*. City, State: Publisher.
 - Book chapter:
Author(s). (Year of Publication). Title of chapter. In A. Editor & B. Editor (Eds.), *Title of book* (xx ed., pp. xxx-xxx). City, State: Publisher.
 - Articles:
Author, A. A., Author, B. B., & Author, C. C. (Year of publication). Title of article. *Title of Periodical*, volume(issue), page range. <https://doi.org/xx.xxxxxxx>

Note about DOIs:

Digital object identifiers (DOIs) make it easier to locate materials online. When available for articles, they should be included in the citation. Not all articles will have DOIs assigned to them. If an article has a DOI, it may appear on the article itself (usually in the publication information on the first page). If no DOI appears on the article, the researcher should use the website crossref.org to search for a DOI. Clicking the “search metadata” tab on the home page of the Crossref site and searching for the article by title will reveal whether a DOI is available for the article. Note the preferred formatting for the DOI in the article citation example above.

Appendices

APPENDIX A: DISSERTATION CHECKLIST

Phase # 1: Pre-Dissertation Coursework - Complete the following courses prior to beginning your dissertation

- Complete ED 7210 Educational Statistics
- Complete ED 7220 Quantitative Research
- Complete ED 7230 Qualitative Research
- Complete ED 7240 Research Development
- Pass your written and oral Comprehensive Exams
- Enroll in ED 7250 Dissertation

Phase # 2: Pre-Proposal Approval – The following steps will guide you in developing the dissertation proposal.

- In conjunction with your chair, select your dissertation committee members
- Submit and receive approval from the EdD Program Committee for your dissertation committee members
- Meet with your dissertation chair and begin writing chapter two
- Complete chapter two and submit to your full committee for approval
- Meet with your chair and begin writing chapter one
- Complete chapter one and submit to your full committee for approval
- Meet with your chair and begin writing chapter three
- Complete chapter three and submit to your full committee for approval
- Defend your dissertation proposal before your committee

Phase # 3: Post-Proposal Approval – Upon approval from your dissertation committee, complete the following steps:

- Upon successful defense, submit your study to the IRB for approval
- Upon IRB approval, conduct pilot study; make adjustments where warranted
- Meet with your chair to receive approval to proceed
- Distribute surveys and/or conduct interviews
- Begin data analysis and/or interview coding
- Review initial data analysis with chair and receive approval to proceed
- Submit chapter four to chair, upon approval, submit to full committee
- Submit chapter five to chair, upon approval, submit to full committee
- Defend your dissertation with your committee (chapters four & five)
- Upon approval, submit to style guide reader and librarian
- Chair notifies EdD Office who then notifies the Registrar that student is approved for graduation

APPENDIX B: ED7250 DISSERTATION READER REQUEST FORM

Name: _____ **Student ID#:** _____ **Program:** EdD

Semester of Initial Registration: Fall 20_____ Spring 20_____ Summer 20_____

Hours for first semester (usually 3 per semester for three semesters) _____

Anticipated Graduation: Spring 20_____ **OR** Fall 20_____

*It is advised that you register for ED7250 **one (1) year prior to your anticipated graduation.** If you are unable to finish ED7250 within the one (1) year allotted, you will be automatically enrolled in ED7260 and charged for a one (1) hour continuation course for each semester that follows until you are finished with your dissertation. Reminder: you must complete the dissertation within the 6-year limit.*

Please provide the following information:

Proposed Dissertation Title:

Research Question:

Research Methodology (Select One):

_____ **Quantitative** _____ **Qualitative** _____ **Mixed-Method**

Instrument Name: _____

Describe / Explain how this methodology (and instrument if applicable) helps you answer your research question(s).

Provide the names of your preferences for the following reader roles for your dissertation:

Chair / Professor of Record Name: _____

First Reader Name: _____

Second Reader Name: _____

Form Reader Name: *Jenae Edwards*

Student Signature _____

Date: _____

*** EMAIL COMPLETED FORM TO EDD@DTS.EDU ***

OFFICE USE ONLY

Committee Review Date: _____

Edd Director's Signature: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX C: ED7250 DISSERTATION REGISTRATION FORM

Name: _____ Student ID#: _____ Program: EdD

Dissertation Registration Hours: Summer 2023 _____ Fall 2023 _____ Spring 2024 _____

Anticipated Graduation: Spring 20 _____ OR Fall 20 _____

It is advised that you register for ED7250 one (1) year prior to your anticipated graduation. If you are unable to finish 7250 within the one (1) year allotted, you will be automatically enrolled in ED7260 and charged for a one (1) hour continuation course for each semester that follows until you are finished with your dissertation. Reminder: you must complete the dissertation within the 6-year limit.

Have you successfully completed your **prospectus**?

Yes ___ No ___

Have you successfully completed your **Comprehensive Exams? admitted to candidacy**?

Yes ___ No ___

Dissertation Title: _____

Chair / Professor of Record Name: _____

First Reader Name: _____

Second Reader Name: _____

Form Reader Name: Jenae Edwards

Dissertation Steps	Timeframe
Prospectus	Developed During ED7240
Proposal (Chapters 1 – 3)	Written During ED7250-1
Defend Proposal	Successfully defend before collecting data and writing chapters 4 & 5
Gather Research / Write Chapters 4 & 5	ED7250-2 and ED7250-3
Defend Dissertation	

Student Signature _____ Date: _____

EMAIL COMPLETED FORM TO EDD@DTS.EDU

OFFICE USE ONLY

Edd Director's Signature: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX D: TITLE PAGE

**Edd Dissertation Title Page:
Example of America Psychological Association's Guidelines**

A Dissertation Presented to the Faculty of the
Educational Ministries and Leadership Department
Dallas Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for
the Degree of Doctor of Education

by
John A. Seminarian
April 2023

APPENDIX E: ABSTRACT PAGE

DISSERTATION TITLE

2

Abstract

Your abstract paragraph should summarize your dissertation research. It should be brief yet comprehensive in terms of the overall subject your research covers.

Abstracts are usually limited to 250 words. Include the overall findings of the dissertation research. This paragraph is used to help future researchers ascertain the possible connection of your research to theirs. It should help practitioners understand the essence of your research so that they can utilize your findings should it apply to educational needs.

Keywords: Important, words, to, your, study