



NOVA SOUTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY
HEALTH PROFESSIONS DIVISION
COLLEGE OF NURSING

Doctoral Student and Dissertation Guide

2016

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Forward

This *Doctoral Student and Dissertation Guide* has been designed to guide students in the preparation of their candidacy and doctoral dissertations according to the requirements of Nova Southeastern University Health Professions Division College of Nursing, PhD in Nursing Education Program. The document describes the steps of candidacy and the dissertation process, provides required forms, and presents the program's form and style requirements with examples.

Because this information is essential and subject to change, the doctoral students are responsible for adhering to all requirements and students should become familiar with the guidelines and resolve any questions with their advisor before proceeding with candidacy and dissertation course work.

For style issues not dealt with specifically in the guide, it is mandatory that students use the most recent edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (APA) for grammar, style, and format. Tables must be constructed according to the most recent edition of the APA publication, *Presenting Your Findings: A Practical Guide for Creating Tables*.

In order to submit dissertation proposals to the Nova Southeastern University (NSU) Institutional Review Board (IRB), candidates should obtain, read, and understand the IRB materials available at <http://www.nova.edu/irb/>

Research Experience

After successful completion of the quantitative and qualitative research courses, the student will seek approval from their faculty advisor to begin the research experience. Each student will be expected to complete a 90 hour mentored research experience prior to enrollment in NSG 7330 Doctoral Seminar III. Students must secure an affiliation agreement with the institution where the research mentor is employed.

To fulfill the requirement, the student will select a research mentor who has an established record of current research. The research mentor must be a PhD, EdD or DNSc nurse researcher who has experience in the research method that the student has selected for their dissertation. A one page paper outlining the research experience, including what the student expects to accomplish, will be sent to the faculty advisor for approval, along with a copy of the mentor's current curriculum vitae. After advisor approval, the student can begin the research experience.

The *Research Experience Form* (Appendix A) will be completed and signed by both the student and mentor at the completion of the 90 hour experience and sent to the faculty advisor. At the completion of the research experience, the student will submit a 1-2 page document explaining the research experience as well as a detailed log which includes date, time (hours spent), brief description of activity, and the final total hours.

Candidacy Requirements and Procedures

Each student will be required to successfully complete a comprehensive examination after the completion of all coursework and research hours and prior to proceeding to the dissertation phase of the program. The comprehensive examination is designed to evaluate the PhD student's mastery of the content of the PhD in Nursing Education program. The chairperson of the comprehensive examination committee will notify students of the dates and requirements for the comprehensive examination in the semester preceding the examination. Students who are eligible to complete the comprehensive examination will be registered for NSG 7330, Doctoral Seminar III.

The examination consists of questions that must be completed in a specified time period during the course. The responses will be graded by two faculty members and a grade of pass or fail will be assigned. A passing grade is required for all four questions in order to successfully complete the examination and advance in the PhD program. The Chairperson of the Comprehensive Examination Committee and the Director of the PhD in Nursing Education Program will notify the student in writing of the comprehensive examination results.

Students may have two attempts to successfully complete the examination. Students who do not successfully complete the comprehensive examination after the second attempt will be referred to the Committee on Student Progress. The student who fails the initial exam must register for NSG 7330 Doctoral Seminar III for the following semester. Failure to pass two comprehensive examinations results in dismissal from the program.

Under no circumstances are students to collaborate with classmates, colleagues or other support persons once questions are received. Students are cautioned that evidence of

collaboration with others in deriving answers and/or plagiarism is grounds for dismissal from the program. Once a student has successfully completed the comprehensive examination, the student may use the initials PhD(c).

Course Registration and Grades

Continuous Registration

Continuous registration is required until the completion of the dissertation. A PhD candidate who has completed the required minimum 60 credits but who has not completed the dissertation must continue to enroll in NSG 7340 Dissertation. Such candidate will register for three credits per semester, each semester, until his or her dissertation chairperson has approved the final pre-edited dissertation manuscript.

Leave of Absence

Candidates may request a leave of absence from the program director. Candidates will need an approved written leave of absence to waive the continuous registration policy. No faculty or committee members' time will be used regarding dissertation advising, review, approval or editing during an approved leave of absence. A leave of absence is granted on a semester-to-semester basis based on policies for excused absences.

Grades

Grades for the dissertation courses (NSG 7430) are pass/fail. The committee chairperson is responsible for entering a grade at the end of the semester. Committee chairpersons require that the candidate submit objectives and timeline for the term in writing at the beginning of each term. Failure to provide this communication with the dissertation chairperson or meet stated objectives may result in a failing grade for the semester. Ultimately, candidates are responsible for their pace and progress.

Dissertation

Completion of the dissertation is partial fulfillment of the requirements for completion of the PhD degree. Students are expected, with the assistance and approval of the dissertation committee chairperson, to select an appropriate topic of sufficient scope to demonstrate scholarly mastery of the program content and to make a meaningful contribution to nursing science. The dissertation is an original, rigorous research study carried out with substantial independence by the doctoral candidate. It represents a significant extrapolation from a base of solid experience or knowledge in the area of concentration. The dissertation significantly advances knowledge, improves professional practice or contributes to understanding in the field of study. Dissertation work is presented in a logical and understandable fashion.

Originality, independence, and rigor deserve some explanation. *Originality* and *independence* mean that the research is conceived, performed, and documented primarily by the doctoral candidate. To be *rigorous*, the research work is characterized by strict accuracy and scrupulous honesty and presents precise distinctions among facts, implications, and suppositions. Rigor is achieved by using demonstrable facts when reporting procedures and results, by building on a foundation of facts when drawing conclusions, by specifying links to facts when inferring implications, by always bringing forward all relevant data, and by being both self-critical and logical in reporting. The dissertation must be of sufficient strength to be able to distill

from it a paper worthy of publication in a journal or in conference proceedings, or to use it as the basis of a textbook or monograph.

Some students may have a good concept for a dissertation topic when they begin the PhD program. The typical new doctoral student, however, does not have to have an idea for a dissertation topic and may have a limited understanding of the dissertation process. Ideas for topics may come from many sources, including course materials and assignments. Many students become anxious because they do not have a dissertation topic, but this is not unusual and almost every student goes through this search process. Proceed methodically, and eventually the student will find a topic. The student may also experience one or more false starts that result in the search for new topics. This is also a normal part of the process and should be expected.

Throughout the program students are encouraged to communicate with faculty members about potential interests and possible topics. In addition, the student should make appointments to meet with faculty members. The faculty will be available to talk with the student, and the student should take advantage of every opportunity to meet with them.

Expectations of Students in Dissertation

1. All communication and submission of dissertation documents occurs in the course through Blackboard.
2. Students enrolled in NSG 7340 Dissertation are expected to maintain an agreed upon schedule for communication between the student and dissertation chair for each semester.
3. Each semester, the student submits measurable goals, including a time-line, to the dissertation chair for approval within the first week of the course through Blackboard. In the event the timeline and goals are not achievable, the student must contact the dissertation chair as soon as possible for re-negotiation purposes.
4. Meeting the goals and adherence to the timeline is critical to achieving a Pass grade for the course.
5. Students who receive two failures in any PhD program course, including dissertation, will be dismissed from the program.

The Dissertation Committee

During the second year of Summer Institute a “Dialogue with Scholars” session is organized to provide a time for students to discuss their phenomenon of interest for their dissertation with the faculty. This session provides the student with valuable feedback on their dissertation concept, proposed method, study design and potential connection to dissertation committee members. In the final year of coursework, students should communicate with their advisor regarding the selection of a dissertation chairperson.

Composition of the Dissertation Committee

The committee will consist of at least three members. A list of eligible NSU faculty is located in the PhD Student Center. The committee chairperson must be a full time, part time, or adjunct NSU nursing faculty who has previously served on a dissertation committee at NSU College of Nursing. The committee members will have earned a dissertation research doctorate with expertise in an area of research or methodology. At least one other committee member must

be a full time, part time, or adjunct NSU faculty. If the student requests approval for a committee member external to NSU, the student must submit that individual's Curriculum Vitae (CV) and provide narrative information that describes what expertise and role that committee member will provide in the dissertation process directly to the chairperson for consideration. It is the student's responsibility to obtain the appropriate signatures on the Dissertation Committee Membership Forms (Appendix B).

In some instances, unforeseen circumstances may necessitate a change in the composition of the committee. If a change of chairperson is required, the Program Director must be notified, and the process described previously regarding agreement to serve as chairperson must be followed. In the event that a committee member, including the chairperson, is unable to serve, the Program Director will advise the student regarding alternatives.

If during the dissertation process, the student perceives that a committee member may be hindering the progress of the dissertation, the student must communicate the concerns directly to the chairperson and they will work to resolve the issue. If the student perceives that the chairperson is hindering the progress of the dissertation, the student must communicate the concerns directly to the Program Director. It is the responsibility of the Program Director to communicate with all parties involved to remediate the situation. In cases where remediation is not possible with current committee members, the Program Director will advise the student regarding alternatives.

Governance of the Committee

After the committee has been formed, it operates under the leadership of the dissertation chairperson, who has the primary responsibility for advising and guiding the student. The chairperson will keep the committee informed about student progress and ensure that the committee, as a unit, provides guidance, evaluation, and consultation. Students must not take directions from a committee member that might result in a change in approach or direction of the research without first consulting with the chairperson.

Committee Expectations

Students may expect feedback from the chairperson and/or members within three weeks during the term. This timeframe excludes holidays and school closures. The chairperson will provide instructions as to how to indicate changes in the document. An in-depth analysis of the work will be done by your chairperson who, at the appropriate time, will instruct the student to distribute copies to the committee members for their review and comments. The committee members will direct all instructions and requests for modifications to the student, with copy to the chairperson. If those modifications are in conflict with suggestions made by the chairperson, the student should contact the chairperson, who makes the final decision.

Dissertation Proposal

Dissertation Proposal Content and Format

The dissertation proposal is comprised of the first three of the five chapters that eventually make up the final dissertation manuscript. The proposal must contain front matter and back matter, unless otherwise indicated, and adhere to the same expectations as explained in the section under *Dissertation Manuscript* in this document. Examples of front matter can be found in Appendix D. The structure of the proposal is dependent on whether the study is

quantitative or qualitative in design. For annotated outline specific to the type of research design, see Appendix E.

Proposal Defense

When the committee determines the student is eligible to defend the proposal, the proposal defense will be scheduled. The proposal defense is an oral presentation of the first three chapters of the dissertation and may be done by telecommunication. The student will have 20 minutes to present a PowerPoint presentation, followed by a question and answer session. The student should be prepared to explain the background of the problem, purpose of the research, philosophical underpinnings and theoretical framework, rationale for the approach including data collection and analysis. The student should email a PowerPoint presentation to each committee member 48 hours before the proposal date. Only the committee members and the PhD Program Director may attend the proposal defense. After a successful defense, the student will secure signatures on the *Approval of Proposal Defense* form (Appendix C).

NOTE: After successful proposal defense, the student should change the verb tense to past tense in chapters one and three. Chapters four and five are written in past tense.

Institutional Review Board

The purpose of the IRB is to protect human subjects involved in research and ensure appropriate practices are being carried out at NSU. After successful completion of the proposal defense, the student must seek approval for their study from the NSU IRB. After approval, the student may then seek approval from the IRB at participating institutions, if applicable.

The student must adhere to University policy regarding research involving human subjects. All research instruments and protocols must be approved by NSU IRB prior to start of data collection. This includes retrospective data, surveys of any type, interviews, testing or any other types of assessments involving human subjects. No data collection can occur prior to the IRB approval.

The Chairperson will assist the student with the IRB application. The student should contact the IRB representative by the time the student has a draft of the proposal. The student may obtain additional information from the IRB's homepage, <http://www.nova.edu/irb>

CITI Training

NSU has determined that all individuals involved in research with human subjects, including investigators (principal and co-) as well as members of the research team must complete the *CITI Course in the Protection of Human Subjects*. CITI is comprised of certain modules. Each college/center at NSU selected the modules that their respective investigators would have to complete. Please be sure to register for the correct learner group that reflects the center/college to which the students belong. Please visit the CITI website, www.citiprogram.org, to register and complete the requisite modules. The CITI program must be completed prior to submitting to the IRB for initial review of a protocol or for continuing review or revision of a previously approved protocol.

Dissertation Defense

All students are required to orally defend their dissertation at the NSU Fort Lauderdale / Davie campus. The dissertation committee members can attend in person or through telecommunication methods. The defense is the final presentation to the dissertation committee and invited guests. The College of Nursing will post notification in the PhD student center and to all Health Professions Division faculty and students.

Format for Dissertation Defense.

- Once approval is given to schedule the defense, the student is responsible to contact each committee member for availability and schedule the defense.
- The student should email a PowerPoint presentation, and the current copy of the dissertation to each committee member 48 hours before the defense date.
- Students will bring copies of the presentation for the audience.
- The student will have 30 minutes to present, followed by a question and answer session.
- Following the question and answer session, the committee will deliberate and give their decision and recommendation to the student.

The student should be prepared to explain the background of the problem, purpose of the research, philosophical underpinnings and theoretical framework, rationale for the approach, the findings and the interpretation. The student will summarize their dissertation, critique it, and then answer questions asked by the committee members. The student should be prepared to explain the dissertation's contribution to knowledge and professional practice. A unanimous vote of all committee members is required to pass the dissertation defense requirement for completion of the degree.

Dissertation Manuscript

It is mandatory that candidates use the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (latest edition) for grammatical, style, and formatting issues. This is the official style manual for the preparation of dissertations in the PhD program in nursing. Approved exceptions to the APA for dissertations in the College of Nursing include:

1. No page headers.
2. No running heads.
3. Page numbering begins with Chapter One (upper right).
4. Lower case roman numerals are to be used on the preliminary pages beginning with the abstract page (p. v). The lower case roman numerals should be centered at the bottom of the page. The first four pages, representing the title page, signature pages and the copyright page are not numbered.
5. All text should be double-spaced with the exception of:
 - Title Page
 - Signature Page
 - Table of Contents
 - Block Quotations
 - Appendices
6. 1.5 inch margin on the left, 1 inch margin on the remaining sides.
7. Top margin of first page of each new chapter is 2 inch all other top margins are 1inch.

8. All text, including tables, figures, and page numbers must fit within the 6 inch by 9 inch image area created by the margins.
9. Use only left justification.
10. Doctoral dissertation abstracts must not exceed 150-250 words.
11. Landscape may be used when appropriate (e.g., charts, tables, flyers, instruments).
12. All IRB letters and annual approval letters are to appear as Appendix A.

The writing style for a proposal and dissertation is scholarly English. Avoid the use of colloquialisms, contractions, slang, affectations, and jargon. Usage should be clear and precise. Third person pronouns are required except in qualitative research where first person is accepted only in the experiential section to express experiences with the phenomena. The final copy must be free of grammatical and spelling errors.

Front Matter

Front matter includes those forms that are placed in the proposal and the completed report. The proposal should have a title page, abstract, table of contents, list of tables and list of figures, as needed. The completed report should have all of the front matter forms listed here. See Appendix D for examples of front matter forms.

Title page. This is the first page of both the proposal and the completed report. No page number should appear on this page.

Approval/signature pages. These pages are not included for proposals. These are the second and third pages in the completed report. No page number should appear on these pages. The student is responsible to make sure all information is correct on the signature pages.

Copyright page. This page is not included for proposals and is the fourth page of the completed report. No page number should appear on this page.

Abstract. This page is included in the proposal. In the proposal, it is written in the future tense. It is the fifth page of the completed report and written in the past tense. The abstract should be limited to 150-250 words in length and is double spaced. See the example in Appendix D for the specific content of the abstract.

Acknowledgments. Acknowledgements are not included in the proposal. Acknowledgements are optional for the completed report. Acknowledgements may express appreciation for the assistance of the dissertation chairperson and dissertation committee members and may also include statements thanking other faculty members, staff members, colleagues, family, and friends. Acknowledgments should be in good taste and should not exceed one page in length.

Table of Contents. The Table of Contents is included for both the proposal and the completed report. Only level one and two headings should be included in the table of contents and is not double spaced. The page number should be printed as a lower case roman numeral centered at the bottom of the page. All other pages are numbered in Arabic numerals located on the top, right corner (see Appendix D).

List of tables. The list of tables is formatted like the table of contents and lists by title each table included in the paper and the page on which it can be found.

List of figures. The list of figures is formatted like the Table of Contents and lists, by title, each figure included in the paper and the page on which it can be found.

Back Matter

Back matter refers to documents placed after the narrative of the proposal and completed report.

Reference list. All works cited in the dissertation must appear in the Reference List using APA formatting.

Appendices. Appendices are used to present material that supplements the text but is too detailed or distracting for inclusion in the narrative. This material should be included if it helps the reader replicate, assess, or understand the investigation. Do not include lengthy program listings and other lengthy documents as appendices unless their content is critically relevant to the contribution the dissertation makes to the advancement of knowledge. Just because a program or data collection is a necessary part of the work does not mean that it must be published with the dissertation.

Appendix A is reserved for the IRB permission documents. Other items that may be appropriate for inclusion in an appendix are correspondence from individuals involved in the study such as letters from officials granting permission to use facilities or supervisors granting permission to conduct the investigation, questionnaires, evaluation instruments, critical original data, complicated mathematical tables, novel algorithms, and data collection forms. Students should consult their chairperson regarding the suitability of inclusion of any lengthy material. Each appendix should be listed by letter and title in the table of contents. Appendices are lettered alphabetically in the order in which they appear in the narrative.

After the Dissertation Defense

Professional Editing

The dissertation is considered completed (but not final) only after the candidate has: (1) successfully defend the dissertation, (2) the chairperson has received and accepted the post-defense revised version, and (3) the dissertation approval form (Appendix D) has been signed by all committee members. The dissertation is considered final only after the copy-edited revisions have been successfully completed, approved by the chairperson, and it is ready for printing and binding. The committee-approved dissertation must be copy-edited by an HPD approved copy-editor. Once the student submits proof that this editing has been completed, the manuscript is sent for binding. The committee is responsible for the content of the dissertation, but the copy-editor's through line by line review assures that the technical details of the dissertation are accurate and consistent, and that the dissertation meets APA style guidelines, as well as the program's format requirements. The candidate is responsible for the costs associated with copy-editing, and for a high quality dissertation report. Check with your chairperson on the list of approved copy-editors.

Final Dissertation Report

Copyright Permission

Inclusion of any copyrighted materials must have letters of permission from the holder of the copyright. The student should prepare him or herself with information in the pamphlet, *Copyright Law and the Doctoral Dissertation: Guidelines to your Legal Rights and Responsibilities* available from ProQuest/UMI.

Paper, Ink and Printing

The final copies need to be submitted on 8.5 x 11 inches, 25% cotton acid-free fiber bond 24 pound paper. The paper should have a watermark that reads 25% cotton when held up to the light. All manuscripts must be submitted in black ink. All text must be clear and crisp. A laser or LaserJet printer should be used. Use only one of the APA approved fonts throughout the manuscript.

Final Report Binding

After the committee members, the Program Director of the PhD in Nursing Education, have signed the *Dissertation Approval Form* (Appendix C) the student will contact the binding company for instructions about how to submit the report for binding and the fees associated with it. If a committee member is not available for signature the student is responsible to send the signature page to all. The Program Director will send the printed *Certification Signature Pages* (Appendix D) through the college and will mail the signed pages back to the candidate to be included for binding. Do not submit the final copies until instructed to do so. Binding is done by Anthony Lloret of Dobbs & Brodeur Inc. Bookbinders, 1030 East 14th St, Hialeah, FL 33010, 786-991-4521.

A minimum of four original copies must be submitted for binding. If more than four copies are requested, submit the complete originals, (including signature pages for signing) for each report to be bound. The distribution of the bound copies are: (1) one copy to the student, (2) one copy to the committee chairperson, (3) one copy to NSU's library, and (4) one copy to the college.

Each copy must include all front and back matter in the correct sequence. All signature pages must be originals. After all signatures have been collected, the student will make arrangements for the copies to be bound and distributed.

Dissertations Abstract

The student must also submit to ProQuest –EDT UMI at <http://dissertations.umi.com/hpdnova>

Graduation and Conferment

After the final report has been approved, the faculty advisor will contact the student with information about how to apply for graduation and degree conferral. All grades must be finalized, and all financial obligations to the University must be paid before a degree is granted. Commencement ceremony is held every August for PhD students.

Appendix A
Research Experience Form

Doctor of Philosophy in Nursing Education

College of Nursing

Research Experience Form

Student Name_____

NSU Number_____

Research Mentor_____

Research Location_____

Total Number of Research Hours_____

Student Signature_____

Mentor Signature_____

Faculty Advisor Signature_____

A 1-2 page document explaining your research experience as well as a detailed log which includes, date, time (hours spent), contact researcher, brief description of activity and a final total of hours.

Appendix B

Dissertation Committee Membership Form

COLLEGE OF NURSING

DISSERTATION COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP FORM

We, the undersigned, agree to serve as members of the Dissertation Committee of:

_____ is developing a proposal

for a dissertation tentatively titled:

(Agreement to be a member of the Dissertation Committee does not imply acceptance of the proposal.)

_____/_____/_____
Signed, Chairperson, Dissertation Committee Printed Name Date

_____/_____/_____
Signed, 2nd Committee Member Printed Name Date

_____/_____/_____
Signed, 3rd Committee Member Printed Name Date

_____/_____/_____
Signed, PhD Program Director Printed Name Date

Committee Members Responsibilities

Responsibilities include the following:

- Offer expertise in methodology or topic area
- Provide substantive and organizational recommendations for sections for which you are the expert
- Read and approve portions of the dissertation as directed by the committee Chairperson
- Read and approve the final draft
- Participate in the proposal and final defense and sign the dissertation approval signature form

Appendix C
Approval of Proposal Defense

COLLEGE OF NURSING

APPROVAL OF PROPOSAL DEFENSE

We, the undersigned, agree that the following candidate has successfully defended the dissertation proposal.

Candidate's full name: _____

Dissertation Proposal Title: _____

Signed:

Chairperson, Dissertation Committee

2nd Member, Dissertation Committee

3rd Member, Dissertation Committee

Cc: Program Director

Appendix D

Front Matter Form Examples

TITLE OF YOUR STUDY

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Nursing Education

Nova Southeastern University

Your Name
20XX

< 1 1/2" from top>
NOVA SOUTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY
HEALTH PROFESSIONS DIVISION
COLLEGE OF NURSING

This dissertation, written by <your name> under direction of <his or her> Dissertation Committee, and approved by all of its members, has been presented and accepted in partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN NURSING EDUCATION

DISSERTATION COMMITTEE

<hr style="border: none; border-top: 1px solid black; margin-bottom: 5px;"/> <p><Typed name and credentials - e.g., Robin Chard, PhD, RN, CNOR,> Chairperson of Dissertation Committee</p>	<hr style="border: none; border-top: 1px solid black; margin-bottom: 5px;"/> <p>Date</p>
---	--

<hr style="border: none; border-top: 1px solid black; margin-bottom: 5px;"/> <p><Typed name and credentials Dissertation Committee Member</p>	<hr style="border: none; border-top: 1px solid black; margin-bottom: 5px;"/> <p>Date</p>
---	--

<hr style="border: none; border-top: 1px solid black; margin-bottom: 5px;"/> <p>Typed name and credentials Dissertation Committee Member</p>	<hr style="border: none; border-top: 1px solid black; margin-bottom: 5px;"/> <p>Date</p>
---	--

<at least 1 1/2 " from bottom>

<1 1/2 " left margin> < 1" right side margin >

< 1 1/2" from top>

**NOVA SOUTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY
HEALTH PROFESSIONS DIVISION
COLLEGE OF NURSING**

Certification

We hereby certify that this dissertation, submitted by <your *name*>, conforms to acceptable standards and is fully adequate in scope and quality to fulfill the dissertation requirement for the Doctor of Philosophy in Nursing Education degree.

Approved:

Eglintine Rigaud, PhD, ARNP, WHNP-BC Assistant Professor Interim Program Director PhD & DNP Programs College of Nursing	Date
--	------

Marcella Rutherford, PhD, MBA, MSN Dean, College of Nursing	Date
--	------

<at least 1 1/2 “ from bottom >

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Abstract

Maximum Length 150-250 words

Background.

Purpose: purpose, research question(s) and/or hypothesis(es)

Theoretical Framework.

Methods.

Results.

Conclusions:

Acknowledgements

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Appendix E

Annotated Outline for Quantitative and Qualitative Studies

Annotated Outline for Quantitative Studies

Chapter One

The Problem and Domain of Inquiry

This section contains the introductory information that provides a background of the problem. This content may contain statistical data that supports that a problem exists. This section explains what the study is about. It should make a natural bridge to the problem statement.

Problem Statement

The problem statement should not be more than a few sentences that are specific and to the point and explains why the study is important. The research problem identifies the topic of interest, the population of interest and the significance of the topic or how it is problematic. The problem statement is a natural bridge to the purpose of the study.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose should not be more than a few sentences. It consists of three components: the variables of interest, the population of interest, and an action verb. It should answer the questions: what is being studied, who is being studied, and why it is being studied.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Research Question and Hypothesis 1

Research question. A research question may have more than one independent and dependent variables. For instance, the student might ask, “What is the range of a set of scores for a variable within this sample.”

Research hypothesis. A simple hypothesis contain only one independent and dependent variable. A complex hypothesis contain two or more independent variables and/ or two or more dependent variables.

Significance of the Study

The findings of your study explain what your study will contribute to nursing knowledge in the following arenas.

Nursing Education

Nursing Practice

Nursing Research

Public Policy

Philosophical Underpinnings

The basic assumptions of any given paradigm involve: ontology (the nature of reality), epistemology (one’s belief about how knowledge is acquired, e.g., how we know what we know), and the methods (the particular steps used by the individual to uncover the answer(s) to his or her research question). Positivism and post-positivism are the philosophical underpinnings for quantitative research; constructivism, interpretation and critical theory constitute the philosophical underpinnings of qualitative research. In general, all qualitative paradigms assume the relativist ontology (there are multiple realities that are socially and individually constructed) and transactional epistemology (the knower and the known are inextricably entwined), as well as dialogic/interpretive methodology. The discussion of the philosophical underpinnings that is congruent with the student’s beliefs should include information about the philosophers that initiated the position.

Theoretical Framework

This information comes from a resource that probably was written by the theorist. Give the historical development of the framework including the discipline from which it was derived. Thoroughly describe the framework and explain its application to the present study. Include in what context the theory has previously been used to study other phenomena. Provide an overview that includes the constructs and their proposed relationships. Designate which constructs are considered to be antecedents and which are considered to be outcomes. Include a schema that depicts the constructs and their relationships as Figure 1. This will be useful when considering your hypotheses.

Theoretical Assumptions

The theoretical assumptions come directly from the theory and are typically included in your resources that explain the theory.

Definition of Terms

Only include those constructs that the student will actually measure. Information that defines the population of interest will be included in chapter 3.

The Construct

Theoretical definition. The theoretical definition comes from the theoretical framework.

Operational definition. The operational definition explains how this construct will be measured. The operational definitions include all measures you use to collect data on your study variables. This includes, subjects/participants, independent variables, and dependent variables. The definition includes the range of possible scores and what high and low scores indicate for your independent and dependent variables. Don't provide information beyond this because the student will provide complete information in chapter 3.

Chapter Summary

Chapter Two

Literature Review

Include an introductory paragraph that review the purpose of the study and information about what the reader should expect in this chapter. Note the search engines the student used and the terms used to do the search. The literature review should be organized based on the research variables. It is a good practice to organize the sections relative to the variables in the study. This review should be a synthesis and analysis of the literature. It is not simply a list of studies and their findings.

Chapter Summary

Note strengths and weaknesses of the studies reviewed and what your study will bring to the current body of knowledge on the topic.

Chapter Three

Methods

Include an introductory paragraph that restates the purpose of the study. Do not use the subheading “introduction” because, again, it is understood.

Research Design

Identify the research design you will use to coherently and logically integrate the different components of the study. This section should only be a few sentences. Discuss the strengths and concerns of the design and why the student chose this design.

Research Assumptions

The research assumptions are beliefs about the variables that the researcher believes to be true. For example, the student assume that:

- The research instruments measure what it states it measures; known as test validity.
- An individual’s behavior, and therefore test scores, will typically remain stable over time; known as test-retest reliability.
- Individuals will report accurately about themselves.
- The test score an individual receives is equal to his or her true ability plus some error, and this error may be attributable to the test itself, the examiner, the examinee, or the environment.

Setting

Clearly describe the setting from which the student will recruit the sample and in which the data will be collected. Start large and then taper to the exact spot. For example, XXX hospital is a XXX bed facility located in XXX that provides XXX services to XXX general populations. XXX patients receive care in this facility each year.....

Sampling Plan

Sampling Strategy

Describe the sampling strategy. Identify whether the plan is a probability sampling technique or non-probability and why the student chose the plan. Include the strengths and weaknesses inherent in the sampling plan and the limitations imposed.

Eligibility Criteria

The demographic portion of your research instrument should have questions that will assure that individuals are eligible to be participants. The exclusion criteria is not the opposite of inclusion.

Inclusion criteria.

Exclusion criteria.

Determination of Sample Size: Power Analysis

The numbers of participants recruited are related to the number of variables the student will test and the statistical test the student will apply. It also considers the degree of accuracy the student requires; this is related to your willingness to accept committing either a Type I or Type II error. Lastly, it considers the magnitude of the effect the student anticipates. The student can refer to previous studies to help determine the anticipated effect. If none exist, then the student may choose a medium effect and explain the limitations imposed by choosing this size. G*Power is useful for calculating sample size.

Protection of Human Subjects

This section must include a description of how the privacy of the participants will be protected and address any risks or benefits that might result from participation. The NSU IRB website provides clear instructions. Specify if the data will be anonymous or confidential.

Risks and benefits of participation. Discuss all potential risks, discomforts, or inconveniences and direct benefits.

Data storage. The IRB requires data be stored separately from any identifiers, if the student have them. Data is saved in a locked file cabinet in the researcher's home and on the researcher's home computer that is password protected for three years and then survey instruments are destroyed by shredding, computer files are erased, computer storage as CDs are destroyed. Explain who will have access to data.

Recruitment

Describe the recruitment strategies including the following:

- How will the information be delivered
- Where recruitment will take place
- What recruitment methodology will be used

Instrumentation

This section may be lengthy. It must provide a complete explanation of each of the instruments the student intends to use. If the instrument has been used previously, summarize the reports of validity and reliability provided by those researchers and clearly indicate the

population used to obtain these psychometric estimates. If the instrument has not previously been used for application to your target population or if the students are developing their own instrument, it must be tested for validity and reliability. Even if it has been used previously with your population, it is a good idea to recalculate the reliability and use your findings to compare to those reported by others. Include permission to use the instruments in your appendix.

Instrument 1 – Name of the instrument

Provide background information on the instrument, i.e. who developed it and for what purpose. Include previous applications and findings. Do this for each instrument the student will use to collect data, except for the demographic information.

Validity. Address all types of validity and if it has been established for the instrument when applied to your population.

Reliability. Reliability can be assessed in two ways: (1) reliability over time typically includes a test-retest procedure to see if participant responses are consistent from one testing to another and (2) reliability as internal consistency. Test-retest is optional but internal consistency must be addressed. Internal consistency is determined by analysis of Cronbach's alpha (The student must state what an acceptable alpha is and the criteria you will use to achieve this. The minimum number of participants necessary to analyze internal consistency is typically 10 subjects per item on the instrument so if one instrument consists of 10 items, the student will need 100 participants for this portion of the analysis.

Scoring. Provide a clear explanation as to how the instrument measures the construct and will be scored. Anyone else should be able to collect data and score the instrument the same as the student does. For example, the instrument consists of 10 items to which the participant may respond on a 7-point Likert scale whereby 1 indicates *strongly disagree* and 7 indicates *strongly agree*. The responses are summed for a composite score which may range from 10 to 70 with higher scores indicated a stronger degree of the construct. Identify the level of measurement that it produces, i.e., nominal, ordinal, interval, ratio.

General Statistical Strategy

For example, responses to the instruments will be entered and all analyses will be carried out by means of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 19 for Windows (2010). The data will be explored through screening for errors. Parametric data considered as dependent variables will be subjected to analyses to assure they have met the basic assumptions of normal distribution and homogeneity of variance. Additional techniques to be employed include frequency histograms, boxplots, descriptive statistics and others depending on your hypotheses.

Data Cleaning

Explain how the student will review the responses for completeness and how the student will handle missing data. Describe how the student will detect errors in data entry and outliers. How the student will define an outlier and what you will do with them, i.e., will you include outliers and if so, how will you lessen their impact?

Descriptives

Descriptive statistics will be used to both describe the sample and report the measures of central tendency of the scores obtained on the instruments. The actual report will be provided in chapter 4.

Reliability Testing

Here explain that the student will calculate the Cronbach's alpha including item-total reliability and alpha if the item were to be deleted. Indicate what the student will consider to be an acceptable and what the student will do about it if it is not, the criteria you will use to adjust the instrument.

Hypothesis Testing

Here include how the student will assure that the data meets the assumptions required for the statistical test, i.e., that the level of the data meets the demands, the dependent variable is normally distributed in your sample, etc. Include the criteria the student will use to accept that this has occurred.

Restate each hypotheses and/or research question. These will provide clear indication as to the statistical tests the student will apply. Explain the statistical test the student will use and why it is appropriate for this analysis.

Limitations

The study design will pose certain threats to the ability to generalize the findings to this or any other population. This section will be in chapter 3 for the proposal and then be moved to chapter 5 when the study is completed.

Threats to Internal Validity

Threats to External Validity

Chapter Summary

Chapter Four Results

The results are just that. It is the statistical outcome of the data testing. The report will follow the outline established in chapter 3. Much of what the student will report will be in table form. The text, *Presenting your findings: A practical guide for creating tables* (Nicol & Pexman, 2010), is most helpful for how to construct tables.

Begin by restating the purpose of the study.

Indicate how many individuals were approached and accepted the invitation to participate. This is your return rate. Explain why individuals declined.

Data Cleaning

Explain how many of the forms were complete and useful for analysis. If forms were missing data, explain to what extent this occurred and how this was managed. Were there outliers? If so, what was the nature of the outliers and how did the student handle them?

Descriptives

Description of the Sample

Here summarize the characteristics of the sample that the student obtained from the demographic portion of your instrument. Often this information is best presented in table form.

Responses to the Measurements

Report the basic measures of central tendency (mean, standard deviation) of the scores obtained on the instruments.

Reliability Testing

Provide information from the calculation of reliability. Compare the alpha the student obtain to those previously reported in other studies using the same instrument, if available. Construct a table that presents the item-total reliability and alpha if the item were to be deleted. If an item met the criteria for deletion the student established in chapter 3, indicate which item it is. Recalculate the descriptive for the instrument after deletion of poorly functioning items.

Hypothesis Testing

First report the values that have assured that the data meets the assumptions required for the statistical test that will be used for hypothesis testing. If the values do not support the assumptions, explain how the data was adjusted or how the student changed your statistical approach

Restate each hypotheses and/or research question. Provide the statistical results and conclude by indicating whether or not the hypothesis was accepted or rejected.

Chapter Summary

Chapter Five Discussion and Summary

This chapter should not contain any statistical values. It is time for the student to speak from the experience. Remember the purpose of the study. Restate the purpose of the study and the theoretical frame work. Restate the theoretical relationships that were being tested. Certainly include whether or not the findings support the theoretical framework.

Summary of the Findings

Provide a succinct summary of the results (no statistics). The student steps out of the details and speak more globally about what your study found and its implications. It is less about the findings and more about what the findings mean.

Integration of the Findings with Previous Literature

Compare your findings to those reported by other researchers. This will take the student back to the studies reviewed in chapter 2. Do not re-state these studies in the depth the student previous did, simply recall these studies for comparison to yours. Use both those studies in which your findings converged (similar findings) and those from which your findings diverged (different findings). Provide an explanation as to why your results may have been different.

Implications of the Findings

Now bring forward the implications the student discussed in chapter 1. The student had anticipated implications in various arenas. Now the student can provide some concrete discussion as to how these findings might be put in to practice or inform future researchers. Do not invent new implications. All implications must have come from the findings or the experience of the study.

Implications for Nursing Education

Implications for Nursing Practice

Implications for Nursing Research

Implications for Public Policy

Limitations

As your study progressed the student likely found that it did not proceed as optimally planned. For example, if the responses fell short of what was anticipated, provide an explanation of why this occurred and what it means for the generalizability of the findings. Be candid. The student doesn't negate the efforts but stands back and realistically considers what might have been done that would have improved the study, including what may be considered for future studies.

Chapter Summary

Suggested Resources for Quantitative Studies

Field, A. (2013). *Discovering statistics using SPSS*. (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Institute fur Experimentelle Psychologie. (2012). G*Power 3.1.4. Retrieved from <http://www.psych.uni-duesseldorf.de/abteilungen/aap/gpower3/download-and-register>

Nicol, A.A.M., & Pexman, P.M. (2010). *Presenting your findings: A practical guide for creating tables*. (6th ed.). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Nunnally, J.C., & Bernstein, I.H. (1994). *Psychometric theory*. (3rd ed.). New York: NY: McGraw-Hill.

Annotated Outline for Qualitative Studies

Chapter One

Problem and Domain of Inquiry

This section contains the introductory information that provides a background of the problem. The content may contain statistical data that supports that a problem exists. This section explains what the study is about and makes a natural bridge to the problem statement.

Problem Statement

The problem statement should not be more than a few sentences that are specific and explains why the study is important. The statement included the topic and population of interest and the significance of the topic or how it is problematic. The problem statement is a natural bridge to the purpose of the study.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose should not be more than a few sentences. The purpose of qualitative research varies according to the research method and the associated assumptions. The study should be designed as an inquiry process to describe or interpret a social or human phenomenon studied in the natural environment.

Research Questions

Research questions guide the inquiry and will depend on the research tradition.

Research Question 1

Significance of the Study

Explain how your study results will contribute to nursing knowledge in the following areas.

Nursing Education

Nursing Practice

Nursing Research

Public Policy

Philosophical Underpinnings

The basic assumptions of any given paradigm involve: ontology (the nature of reality), epistemology (one's belief about how knowledge is acquired, e.g., how we know what we know), and the methods (The particular steps used by the individual to uncover the answer(s) to his or her research question). Positivism and post-positivism are the philosophical underpinnings for quantitative research; constructivism, interpretation and critical theory constitute the philosophical underpinnings of qualitative research. In general, all qualitative paradigms assume the relativist ontology (there are multiple realities that are socially and individually constructed) and transactional epistemology (the knower and the known are inextricably entwined), as well as dialogic/interpretive methodology. The discussion of the philosophical underpinnings that is congruent with the student's beliefs should include information about the philosophers that initiated the position.

Research Tradition

A wide variety of approaches guide a qualitative study; common approaches include: ethnography, phenomenology, and grounded theory. Thoroughly describe the approach and its application to the study.

Definition of Terms

Definitions are study specific. In this section, provide conceptual definitions or a concept analysis for key phenomena addressed in the study but indicate that the intent of the study will be to have the meaning of the concepts defined by those being studied. Do not include information that defines the population of interest as that will be included in chapter 3.

Chapter Summary

Chapter Two Review of the Literature

The chapter contains the knowledge that is the context for the study. It is a synthesis and analysis of the available literature on the phenomenon of interest and establishes its significance and answers the question of why the study should be done. Experiential context addresses your personal knowledge or involvement with the phenomenon of interest.

The chapter should reflect a logical pattern of knowledge surrounding the phenomenon of interest.

Chapter Summary

Chapter Three Methods

Research Design

Qualitative studies use an emergent design and may be cross-sectional or longitudinal.

Research Assumptions

The research assumption is a statement that is presumed to be true without validation. By determining our assumptions, biases, understandings, and beliefs prior to the research, we are open to the possibilities. For example, the student assumes:

- People can reflect on and share their experiences of deeply personal issues
- The researcher will maintain openness when interpreting new perspectives
- Individuals will report accurately and truthfully about themselves.
- Reaching data saturation validates the themes

Setting

Clearly describe the setting from which you will recruit the participants and in which the data will be collected.

Sampling Plan

Sampling Strategy

Describe the specific, purposive sampling technique you will use. Include the strengths and weaknesses and the limitations imposed.

Eligibility Criteria

Inclusion criteria.

Exclusion criteria.

Sample Size

Provide an estimate of the sample size. Sample size estimates may be based on previous studies or topics with similar participants.

Protection of Human Subjects

This section must include a description of how the privacy of the participants will be protected and address any risks or benefits that might result from participation. The NSU IRB website provides clear instructions. Specify if the data will be anonymous or confidential.

Risks and benefits of participation. Discuss all potential risks, discomforts, or inconveniences and direct benefits.

Data storage. The IRB requires data to be stored separately from any identifiers. Describe the process for securely protecting data.

Recruitment

Describe the recruitment strategies including the following:

- How will the information be delivered
- Where recruitment will take place
- What recruitment methodology will be used

Data Collection

Describe the data collection procedures (e.g., interviews, focus groups, field notes, audio-recordings, observations). Include interview guide, questionnaire, or demographic data sheet if applicable as appendices.

Data Management and Organization

Describe the process used to manage and ensure the integrity of the transcribed data. Content will be dependent on the specific qualitative method used

Data Analysis

Describe the data analysis process such as:

- Data immersion
- Read the text through the lens of the research question or theoretical framework
- Coding
- Constant comparison
- Repeat the process
- Identify patterns and themes

Rigor

This section should address criteria for identifying rigor of the data and analysis: credibility, dependability, confirmability, transferability, and authenticity. The explanation of confirmability should include how the student will carry out member checks. The discussion should include how they apply and how they will be assured.

Limitations

Discuss how the study design will affect the ability to generalize the findings. This section will be in chapter 3 for the proposal and be moved to chapter 5 when the study is completed.

Chapter Summary

Chapter Four Interpretation of the Findings

Begin with an introduction which includes the themes and sub-themes identified in the analysis. Provide detailed descriptions of each theme supported by data such as quotes or observations.

Chapter Summary

Chapter Five

Discussion and Summary

It is time for the student to speak from the experience. Remember the purpose of the study.

Summary of the Findings

Provide a succinct summary of the results. It is less about the findings and more about what the findings mean.

Integration of the Findings with Previous Literature

Compare your findings to those reported by other researchers related to the phenomenon.

Implications of the Findings

The student discusses the implications described in chapter 1. The student should provide a concrete discussion as to how the findings may be applied to practice or inform future research. All implications must come from the findings or the experience of the study; do not invent new implications.

Implications for Nursing Education

Implications for Nursing Practice

Implications for Nursing Research

Implications for Public Policy

Limitations

Limitations were originally presented in chapter 3. Move that section into this location

Chapter Summary

Suggested Resources for Qualitative Studies

Creswell, J.W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Lincoln, Y.S., & Guba, E.G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Polit, D.F., & Beck, C.T. (2010). *Nursing research: Generating and assessing evidence for nursing practice*. (9th ed.). Baltimore, MD: Wolters Kluwer/Lippincott Williams & Wilkins.

Roush, K. (2015). *A nurse's step-by-step guide to writing your dissertation or capstone*. Indianapolis, IN: Sigma Theta Tau International.