



Harris College of Nursing & Health Sciences

Ph.D. in Health Sciences

Dissertation Guidelines

The dissertation will be prepared using a three-manuscript format, with each manuscript presenting different aspects of the candidate's scholarly work. The manuscripts will be supplemented with introductory, theoretical, methodological, and discussion/conclusion materials as necessary to create a cohesive body of work that supports the research questions. The candidate must be the first author on all three manuscripts; the first two must be submitted to a peer-reviewed journal prior to the dissertation defense. To allow students to incorporate committee members' feedback, the third manuscript can be submitted to a journal after the defense.

Students are advised to identify their dissertation committee members immediately after the Comprehensive Exams have been passed. Acceptance of the manuscripts for publication is not a requirement for the dissertation defense. Students are also advised to carefully consider journal selection prior to submitting their manuscripts for publication. Should a manuscript be published, the student must be able to obtain permission to include copy written material in the dissertation.

The final dissertation will conform to the specifications outlined in the "Harris College of Nursing & Health Sciences Dissertation Manual" (available at <http://www.research.tcu.edu.pdf>). The main body of the dissertation will consist of five sections:

1. Introduction

The introduction should function as the cord that weaves the various manuscripts together and describes, for the reader, their 'collective meaning' and 'combined contribution' to the field. The introduction should include the following:

- a. A clear statement of the study's purpose and hypotheses to be tested, or research questions for a qualitative study.
- b. The importance of the problem, i.e., why it is worth researching, why it matters to the student's field of study.
- c. The theoretical foundation(s) supporting the problem/issue.
- d. An overview of the important literature (overview, because each article will have its own unique literature review).
- e. Statements about the relationships among the dissertation manuscripts.

2. Manuscript #1

3. Manuscript #2

4. Manuscript #3

5. Discussion – The discussion will summarize the dissertation's findings of the three manuscripts into a synopsis that relates the work to the extant literature. The discussion will also address similarities and differences between the separate manuscripts that are included in the dissertation, striving as

much as possible to present the document as representative of a coherent body of work. The discussion chapter ‘ties’ everything together and helps the reader see how the various manuscripts, taken together, contribute to the knowledge base regarding the problem. The discussion chapter should present/discuss research imperatives, or knowledge gaps, not visible when each manuscript is considered individually and should articulate how the findings from the three articles guide research and practice, and sets an agenda for future research on the issues addressed in the dissertation.

Final copy

The final copy of the dissertation should be formatted and bound consistent with TCU HCNHS dissertation guidelines. Dissertations must be “coherent and consistent in appearance throughout, which means that previously published material must be printed using the same font and format as the rest of the dissertation.” [\[supply the dissertation manual link here\]](#)

Authorship

Students must be first author on all three articles. As first authors, students are responsible for development and articulation of a concept or idea for research, development of a proposal to pursue this idea, development of a research design, conducting research and analysis, writing major portions of a manuscript, designing an intervention or assessment (if relevant), and interpreting results.

No other students can be co-authors on any of the articles. Co-authors must be identified at the student’s dissertation proposal. The article and the role of the co-authors must be presented to and approved by all members of the dissertation committee. The student’s committee must approve any changes in co-authorship. In addition, the student must indicate the percentage of effort and description of the role played by each author in the introductory chapter to the dissertation.

Content

At least two of the articles should be based on data that are analyzed by the student. If the third article is conceptual in nature, or based on a systematic review of the literature, it must be connected to the theme or themes of the dissertation without heavily duplicating the content of either article. Whether the extent of any overlap is excessive will be determined by the student’s dissertation committee.

A certain amount of overlap is acceptable. For example, portions of the literature review may need to be cited in the various articles because it delineates the entire historical background of the study’s focal topic. Redundancy can be carefully reduced by citing one’s own work. However, self-plagiarism - reusing one’s own previously written work or data in a ‘new’ written product without letting the reader know that this material has appeared elsewhere - is prohibited.

Copyright

Students must secure all copyright permissions before finalizing the proposal and formatting the dissertation. Some journals might have copyright peculiarities that make it a necessity to find a different journal for submission. All of these issues should be considered early on in the process. The student should make sure that this entire process is compliant with TCU HCNHS dissertation format guidelines [\[provide website link for this information\]](#)

Dissertation Procedures

A student, in collaboration with his/her advisor, will form a dissertation committee for the purpose of overseeing and approving the student's dissertation. The committee is charged with ensuring the quality and originality of the work.

Selecting a Committee

The dissertation committee should consist of the Committee Chairperson and two to four Committee members. The committee chair and one of the committee members must be from Harris College of Nursing & Health Sciences (HCNHS). The committee chair must have an HCNHS Graduate Research Faculty appointment, while the other HCNHS committee member(s) must have Graduate Faculty appointment(s). One member can be from outside of HCNHS and/or the university. If you plan to have a non-TCU faculty member serve on your committee, the PhD oversight committee must approve this appointment. The PhD in Health Sciences director must approve the composition of the committee. The director may attend all committee meetings, but is considered *ex officio* unless officially chosen as a committee member.

Working with the Committee Chairperson, the candidate assembles the dissertation committee and secures the necessary signatures on the Research Topic Approval Form ([link to form](#)).

If the project requires review by either TCU's Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRB) or the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC), final approval of the Research Topic Approval Form will be delayed by the PhD Director until the IRB or IACUC has reviewed and approved the research project.

Changes to your dissertation committee or research topic required approval and must be submitted electronically. To make a change to an approved research topic, please submit the amendment form found [here](#).

RESPONSIBILITIES

It is the responsibility of all students, faculty, and staff to comply with all applicable university and federal policies and regulations. This section of the dissertation manual outlines some of your responsibilities and those of your committee chairperson and PhD director.

PhD Student

1. Work with your Committee Chairperson to select a committee.
2. Communicate often with the Committee Chairperson until you graduate.
3. Complete the electronic Research Topic Approval Form by the required deadline. If changes occur, either in the committee or topic, a Research Topic Amendment form must be completed and approved.
4. Submit a protocol for review by the IRB and or IACUC if appropriate.
5. Compose a clear and correct dissertation manuscript while working closely with the committee at every stage of the composition process. Follow your discipline's prescribed style manual, e.g., APA.
6. Work with the Committee Chairperson to fulfill all departmental obligations related to dissertation preparation.
7. Work with your committee chair to submit your manuscripts to your other committee members at least 2 weeks prior to the defense for a preliminary review.

8. Submit a final draft copy for review to the Associate Dean for Research at least two weeks prior to final ProQuest submission.
9. Complete all forms required by the PhD in Health Sciences program.
10. Upload the dissertation to ProQuest through www.library.tcu.edu.

Dissertation Committee Chairperson

The committee chairperson is expected to guide and counsel the Candidate during the dissertation preparation. The counseling process involves the following specific responsibilities:

1. Communicate often with your student. If you have not heard from your student in awhile, contact him or her.
2. Work with your student to select a committee.
3. Ensure that your student is progressing normally; intervene if you have information suggesting that a problem is occurring.
4. Be aware of the time limits for doctoral students.
5. Assist your student in submitting the protocols for the IRB or IACUC.
6. Ensure that your student is working closely with the committee at each stage of the dissertation process.
7. Ensure that your student has corrected formatting, spelling, and/or punctuation errors in their dissertation. Confirm format of signature page before you sign it.
8. Administer all college requirements such as the defense. Notify the Associate Dean for Research of the results of the defense.
9. Remind the candidate to submit a final draft copy of the dissertation for format review to the Associate Dean for Research at least two weeks prior to final submission.
10. Approve and sign the completed dissertation. Ensure that all other members of the committee have signed before the document is sent to the Associate Dean for Research.
11. Process a change of grade form for all dissertation credits.

PhD Director

1. Monitor graduate student schedules so that they are not registering for dissertation credits until they have passed their written and oral comprehensive exams and are actually conducting the final dissertation research.
2. Ensure that Committee Chairpersons and members of the dissertation committees are approved according to the Graduate Faculty assignments.
3. Know the university and college policies and procedures regarding research compliance, academic integrity, and the dissertation process, including submission of the research topic approval form, dissertation submission, outside readers, and relevant deadlines.

Publication Requirements

It is expected that the three articles submitted for the defense be of publishable quality. It is acceptable for a student to include two of the three previously published journal articles in the three-article dissertation, as long as (a) all authorship requirements in our PhD in Health Sciences guidelines are adhered to, (b) the dissertation committee agrees to a published manuscript's inclusion as an integrated and substantial chapter of the dissertation and (c) the student receives continuous feedback and approval of that article from their dissertation supervisor and committee members during the publication process. That includes quality of the article, journal submission, response to reviews of the article, and guidance on acceptance. The student must obtain copyright permission from the publishing journal to include the article in his/her dissertation. U.S law requires doing so. When asking for permission to include the article in the dissertation, students should notify the journal editor that the dissertation will be made

available on-line. Uploading the dissertation to the TCU Library is a requirement of graduation. The usual process requires electronic submission of a PDF file, according to the instructions posted at library.tcu.edu. Copyright and bound copies may be obtained; fees for these optional services are paid by the student.

“After the contents and format of your thesis or dissertation has been approved by your school or college, the last step is to submit a PDF version for online archiving and access. The PDF version is submitted to Proquest/UMI, and will appear in their Dissertations Abstracts International or Masters Abstracts International databases. It will also be saved to an online repository of theses and dissertations at TCU, with a record in the TCU Library catalog that links to the PDF file. Please note that by default, theses and dissertations in TCU's repository are freely available, or become freely available at the end of any embargo period specified in your submission to UMI.”

Publication Guidelines

1. Journals to which articles are being submitted must be approved by the dissertation committee. Serving as an “editorial board” for the student, the committee will help select journals that will challenge the student and offer a reasonable chance of publication success.
2. A maximum of two article(s) published or accepted for publication after the *dissertation proposal* may be included. The article(s) must represent work undertaken while the student is enrolled in the PhD program and be approved by the committee. The article(s) must be connected to the theme or themes of the dissertation. If a published article is approved by the committee, the student will be responsible for securing necessary permissions from the copyright holder and other authors.
3. If an article is rejected by a journal during the dissertation process, the student may submit to another journal approved by the dissertation committee. In the case of a revise and resubmit during the dissertation process, any changes to the article must be approved by the dissertation committee. Co-authorship will not be changed for a revise and resubmit.
4. If an article is rejected by a journal after the successful completion and defense of the dissertation, co-authorship decisions that were made during the dissertation process will no longer be in effect. Submission to a new journal will be at the sole discretion of the PhD graduate. Also after the successful dissertation defense, any new submission or re-submission, including changes in the authorship or article content, will be at the discretion of the PhD graduate.
5. If the journal reviewers suggest modifications to any of the three submitted manuscripts prior to the dissertation defense, a plan for addressing those suggestions should be shared and approved by the dissertation chair/committee before the changes are enacted. Changes can be made to any of the three manuscripts if the dissertation chair/committee members are aware of and agree to the changes being made and their rationale. Students may opt to defer changes requested by a journal to which they have submitted an article until their dissertation has been successfully defended.

Links

6. [Deadlines and Submission Instructions:](#)
7. [Format Guidelines:](#)
8. [Fair Use Guidelines:](#)