



Harris College of Nursing & Health Sciences

Ph.D. in Health Sciences

Dissertation Proposal

Purpose of the dissertation proposal: The dissertation proposal is a detailed plan describing the research that constitutes the student's dissertation. The proposal is submitted to the student's dissertation committee for feedback and approval. The proposal allows the committee to assess the student's proposed research project, ensuring it meets program standards. Reviewing the proposal also allows the committee to alert the student to potential problems with the project. Once approved by the committee, the dissertation proposal outlines the scope of work required for the dissertation. Any alterations to the methodology outlined in the proposal must be approved by the student's dissertation committee.

A full dissertation proposal includes **the submission of the dissertation proposal document and the oral presentation of the proposal document to the dissertation committee.**

The dissertation proposal document must include:

- (a) **An introductory chapter** that describes how the three manuscripts comprising the final dissertation document will make a contribution to the current body of knowledge related to the student's subject area. This introductory chapter for the proposal can serve as the initial draft for the first chapter of the final dissertation document. *See Dissertation Guidelines for further description.*
- (b) **Copy of manuscript 1 to be included in the dissertation**
- (c) **Copy of manuscript 2 OR a detailed outline of manuscript 2 if in progress**
- (d) **Description of work for the third manuscript/dissertation project** inclusive of the project's problem statement/ specific aims, background and significance and a comprehensive research plan to address the research aims
- (e) **A timeline for completion of the work**

The dissertation proposal document should be sent to the dissertation committee at least two weeks before the oral presentation of the proposal. The oral presentation only includes the dissertation committee and is not open to the public. Other PhD students and mentors may request to attend the meeting at the discretion of the presenting student and mentor.

The oral presentation of the dissertation proposal should proceed as follows:

- (a) The student will present the components of the proposal to the committee, with particular focus on the research aims and plan for the third manuscript/ project.
- (b) During the presentation, the committee will discuss the project goals and their feasibility. The committee's goal should be to guide the student towards a project with appropriate research methods and publishable results. University guidelines require that a dissertation project "demonstrate superior research abilities, capacity for sound independent analysis and judgment,

and effectiveness of expression.” The committee can decide to approve or call for modifications to the proposal.

- a. If minor revisions are needed and the committee is in agreement, the dissertation committee chairperson can work with the student to complete the minor revisions, and the committee can still vote to approve the proposal (pending minor revisions)
 - b. If substantial revisions are needed, the committee may choose to schedule a second meeting OR to receive and approve the revisions in written form.
- (c) Every member of the committee must accept the proposal for the student’s work to proceed. The final, approved dissertation document will constitute an agreement that, if the project is completed to a satisfactory level and final dissertation document prepared, the student will qualify for graduation.
- (d) If it becomes necessary to make substantial adjustments to the proposal after its approval, students should discuss those adjustments with their dissertation committee chair and then submit those changes to the members of the committee for approval. All committee members must agree to the changes before the student proceeds.

Committee Selection

In accordance with the procedures laid out in the Dissertation Guidelines, students should select committee members with the guidance of their Dissertation Committee Chairperson. Committees include a chairperson plus two to four committee members, and at least two members must be from Harris College of Nursing & Health Sciences.

To formally appoint a committee and identify a research topic, the Research Topic Approval Form must be completed and submitted to the PhD in Health Sciences Director and Oversight committee. Committee members should have Graduate Faculty status or the equivalent (if they are from an outside institution): evidence of graduate faculty status should be submitted with the approval form.

Approval of Dissertation Proposal

Following the oral presentation of the dissertation proposal, the dissertation committee should meet in a closed session (without the student) to discuss the proposal, using the Doctoral Dissertation Proposal Form as a guideline (see Appendix). If all committee members agree that the written document and oral proposal meet or exceed expectations, the committee will sign the form and indicate that the student has “passed” the dissertation proposal and can proceed with his or her study. Submit the signed form to the PhD Director.

Appendix A
Doctoral Dissertation Proposal Form



Harris College of Nursing & Health Sciences

Ph.D. in Health Sciences

DOCTORAL DISSERTATION – PROPOSAL FORM

Name of Student: _____

Project Title: _____

Date: _____

Approved by:

Committee Members

Signature

Advisor: _____

Member: _____

Rating Scale:

1. Unsatisfactory – does not meet expectations
2. Satisfactory – meets or exceeds expectations

WRITTEN DOCUMENT		ORAL PROPOSAL	
Written communication		Verbal communication	
Originality		Research ability and potential	
Accuracy		Organization	
Organization		Familiarity with research literature	
Familiarity with research literature		Understanding of RCR principles	
		Mastery of research design and conduct	

Overall Result: Pass

Fail

Appendix B
Manual for Preparation of Dissertation Proposal

The following sections are relevant to preparation of the dissertation proposal and match the formatting requirements for Harris College.

Section I. Manuals and formbooks

Harris College of Nursing and Health Sciences does not require all departments to use the same format, but most use APA style. For general guidance on formatting, consult Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. Because the thesis/dissertation should reflect the requirements of the discipline, documentation should be in accordance with professional stylebooks. The Departments listed below have provided the titles of style manuals. In all cases the latest editions are to be consulted. The References section of this manual has given APA style examples (see References, p. 6).

Communication Sciences and Disorders

American Psychological Association Manual (APA style)

American Medical Association Manual (AMA style)

Kinesiology

American Psychological Association Manual (APA style)

American College of Science and Medicine (ACSM style)

Nursing

American Psychological Association Manual (APA style)

Social Work

American Psychological Association Manual (APA style)

School of Nurse Anesthesia

American Medical Association Manual (AMA style)

Section II. Parts and order of the manuscript

A manuscript generally has three main parts: the preliminary pages, the text, and the reference material. The order of these is usually as follows:

The Preliminaries

Title page

One blank page or copyright notice if the thesis/dissertation is to be copyrighted (see preliminary pages of this manual following this information)

Table of contents, with page references

List of figures, with titles and page references (if there are figures)

List of tables, with titles and page references (if there are tables)

(NOTE: All tables and figures should be embedded in the text of the document, *not* presented in a separate section at the end of the document)

The Text

This section should include those pieces of the dissertation referenced in the proposal guidelines (Introduction, Manuscript 1, Manuscript 2, Proposal for Manuscript 3, Expected Timeline).

Reference (In this order following the text):

References

Appendices

Abstract

Section III. Manuscript presentation

The manuscript, as a demonstration of your ability in research, analysis, and effectiveness of expression, should have an appearance in keeping with such a document. Unsightly irregularities, such as handwritten insertions and obvious use of correction fluids or erasures are not permitted.

Unacceptable theses will be rejected by the department and college.

Section IV. Margins and spacing

- a. The text of the manuscript is double-spaced. Footnotes are single-spaced. Indented quotations may be single or double-spaced. Consult the approved format for your discipline for additional guidance on spacing.
- b. The left margin (binding side) should be no less than 1.25 inches, and the top margin not less than 1 inch. The right and bottom margins must have a clearance of not less than .75 inch from the typed material. Any of the approved formbooks will give rules for margins well within these limits. Charts, maps, and other illustrative material must meet these margin requirements also.

Section V. Pagination

- a. Except the blank pages preceding the title page and following the approval page and the abstract page, each page in the manuscript should be assigned a number. Header and footer margins for page numbers are $\frac{1}{2}$ inch; i.e., there is $\frac{1}{2}$ inch margin between the page number and the top or bottom of the page. The page number is the only mark that should appear within the margins specified above in VIIIb.
- b. For the preliminary pages, small Roman numerals (i, ii, iii, iv, etc.) are used. The numbering should begin with "ii"; the title page counts as page "i", but the number does not appear. The blank page or copyright page is not counted or numbered. These page numbers are centered at the bottom of the page. Preliminary pages of this manual illustrate this.
- c. For the remainder of the manuscript including the text, illustrations, appendices, and references, Arabic numerals are used. All pages are numbered, except the abstract page. Do not use letter suffixes such as 10a, 10b, etc. The numbering should begin with "1", and run consecutively to the end of the thesis. Page numbers should be placed at the upper right margin, consistently above the text.

Section IX. Special pages

- a. Title Page: The title page contains: (1) the title, in capitals, double-spaced if longer than one line, (2) the full name of the student, (3) the degree or degrees held, (4) sources and dates of the degree or degrees, (5) the "partial fulfillment" statement, (6) the degree sought, the date the degree is to

be conferred. Proper spacing is assured if the sample page is used as a guide.

- b. Table of Contents, List of Figures, etc.: The Table of Contents listed in the full dissertation manual is a good illustration of how these pages should be formatted. Page reference numbers should be placed using a right tab so that they align properly at the right side of each page.