Format of Dissertation - REVISED

Dissertations can look different depending on the nature of the student’s research. The structure should be discussed and agreed upon by the student, advisor, and committee. Two suggested models for how the dissertation can be structured are provided below. These models are intended to provide a streamlined path to developing professional products out of the dissertation – beginnings of a monograph or book (Model 1) or manuscripts (Model 2). However, other structures may align with other types of professional products. If an alternative structure (not Model 1 or 2) is appropriate, then it is up to the student, advisor, and committee to clarify exactly what is required for the dissertation (and determine how this can translate into professional products).

At the suggestion of your advisor, students may wish to share drafts of their proposal (or a section) with committee members (see above for committee composition), especially if they have expertise in the content or methods. In most cases, however, your advisor will provide most of the feedback for your proposal. You will probably need to write several drafts before the advisor considers it ready for your committee to read and for you to schedule your proposal meeting.

Model 1: Five Chapter Dissertation

Abstract
Chapter 1: Introduction
Chapter 2: Review of Literature
Chapter 3: Methods
Chapter 4: Results
Chapter 5: Discussion and conclusions

Chapter content is based on the approved dissertation proposal and presents the data and interpretation of findings from the dissertation research. The document may also include preliminary work completed while the student was in the PhD program. The student is expected to be the sole author of the dissertation thesis. The dissertation should be prepared in APA format. There are no page limits for individual chapters or appendices; however, students should consult with their faculty advisor about preferred length of the document.

Model 2: Three Paper Dissertation

Abstract
Introduction
Manuscript 1
Manuscript 2
Manuscript 3
Discussion
Students may choose to write a 2 or 3 paper dissertation in which 2 or 3 manuscripts are prepared. For each manuscript, all committee members must agree on the focus and aims, the target journal, timeline for submission, and any planned co-authorship. The manuscripts must be distinct from each other, but the student must be able to logically tie them together toward a focused program of research. At least two of the manuscripts must be data-based and report new and original findings. The manuscripts can have co-authors, but the student should be the first author on all manuscripts. Students are required to complete the below table to indicate their percent effort, and that of co-authors, on each manuscript in the categories of conceptualization, analysis, and writing. Co-authors must attest that the student did the majority of the work and most of the writing. Manuscripts do not need to be submitted to the selected journals prior to graduation, but should be formatted according to the journal guidelines.

One of the manuscripts can be a critical review of the topic (ending in next directions for field). This manuscript could stem from one's preliminary examination, but the student would be expected to have been substantially further developed.

Up to two manuscripts already submitted and reviewed or accepted for publication at the time of the dissertation defense may be allowed, at the discretion of the committee, as long as (1) they are substantive to the dissertation, (2) the work was completed while the student was enrolled in the PhD program, (3) the student is the first author of the manuscript, and (4) all co-authors confirm that the student did the majority of the work. If manuscripts already accepted for publication are to be included, the student must obtain written permission from the copyright holder (the journal) to include the material in the dissertation deposited with the Graduate School.

Committee members should expect that journal page restrictions will limit the amount of detail that can be provided in the manuscripts. Instruments, tables, and other relevant documents may be submitted as appendices, but a limit of no more than 30 pages of appendices is recommended. Committee members might not carefully review all appendix documents in detail. Content and issues that do not fit in the allowable page limit of the manuscripts are appropriate for questions and discussion in the oral defense.

In addition to the 2 to 3 papers, the dissertation must include: 1) an Introductory chapter that provides an introduction to the manuscripts and explanation of how they integrate to represent a cohesive body of work; 2) a Discussion including synthesis of main findings across manuscripts, their meaning, and future directions. The Introductory and Discussion chapters should be prepared in APA format.