

Procedure Number: 618a
Procedure Name: Dissertation Proposal, Dissertation, Preliminary Approval, and Final Defense for PhD in Nursing Program Students
Approved by: Nursing Graduate Council
Date: 02/09/2024

Proposal:

Content of Dissertation Proposal: The dissertation proposal addresses the following areas: (a) what the student intends to do, (b) why the proposed work is important, (c) what has already been done by the student and others, and (d) how the student is going to conduct the research.

Format: The proposal is prepared by following the Research (R) Instructions in the SF424 (R&R) Application Guide- for the R01 parent grant. A variety of referencing systems may be preferred for the dissertation proposal (i.e. due to page limitations for the R01 application, you may use a referencing system other than APA). Therefore, students are advised to use a software referencing program (e.g., Zotero) in the preparation of written work for all dissertation documents requiring references. The proposal should be single spaced, Times New Roman 12-point font, and half-inch margins.

The Specific Aims and Research Strategy (discussed below) may not exceed 13 pages, including all tables and figures. A budget is not required for the dissertation proposal. The components of the research plan are described as follows:

Specific Aims- 1 Page Limit

Specific Aims Page: This section concisely and briefly introduces the reader to the problem of interest and sets the context for the substance of the proposed research. The Specific Aims do NOT count toward your Research Strategy, which has a 12-page limit. Concisely state the goals of the proposed research, which are typically stated as specific aims. Summarize the expected outcomes, including the impact of research on the fields involved. Succinctly list the objectives of the proposed research (e.g., to test a hypothesis, create a novel design, solve a specific problem, etc.).

Research Strategy- Significance, Innovation and Approach Sections- 12 pages

Research Strategy: 12 pages (for R01s). This section includes the following headings: Significance, Innovation, and Approach.

A. Significance: This section of the proposal provides a critical evaluation and synthesis of the literature leading to the proposed research. Please include the following: 1) A literature review that reflects current research from multidisciplinary sources. 2) Gaps in knowledge that the dissertation will address are clearly, logically, and concisely articulated. 3) The importance of the proposed research to health and nursing by relating the specific aims to the broad, long-term objectives. 4) How the proposed project will improve scientific knowledge, technical capability,

and/or clinical practice in one or more broad fields. 5) How the concepts, methods, technologies, treatments, services, or preventative interventions that drive this field will be changed if the proposed aims are achieved.

B. Innovation: Explain how the application challenges and seeks to shift current research or clinical practice paradigms. Describe any novel theoretical concepts, approaches or methodologies, instrumentation, or intervention(s) to be developed or used, and any advantage over existing methodologies, instrumentation or intervention(s) that will be tested. Explain any refinements, improvements, or new applications of theoretical concepts, approaches or methodologies, instrumentation, or interventions.

Preliminary Studies. For the PhD student, preliminary studies are not typically needed. However, if the student has previous experience with related research, it should be described here.

C. Approach: In this section, please describe the overall research strategy or study design, population and sampling procedures, the study methodology, and analyses to be used to accomplish the specific aims of the project.

1) Research Design and Setting. Describe the study design and setting.

2) Population, Sample, Sampling Procedures. Identify the sample composition, how the sample will be obtained, and justify the sample size. Describe the sample in enough detail to determine the feasibility of obtaining a suitable sample size to test the hypotheses, if applicable.

3) Instruments. Please describe each instrument along with reliability and validity information. Evidence of the psychometric properties of the proposed instrument(s) should be presented, along with plans for testing in the dissertation.

4) Data Collection Procedures and any planned Intervention(s) should be described.

5) Data Analysis and Interpretation. Restate each hypothesis/or specific aim. Data analysis should specifically address the testing of each specific aim, hypothesis, or research question. Please include details on how the data will be collected, analyzed, and interpreted as well as any resource-sharing plans as appropriate. Also, discuss potential problems, alternative strategies, and benchmarks for success anticipated to achieve the aims. If the project is in the early stages of development, describe any strategy to establish feasibility, and address the management of any high-risk aspects of the proposed work.

D. Study Limitations and potential problems should be described. Alternative approaches and procedures should be described so that specific aims can be achieved, and human subject considerations are met.

E. Human Subjects, Animal Subjects or Biosafety Concerns. Please include a paragraph on the protection of research participants (human or animal) including approvals that will be sought, consents or assents that will be obtained, potential risks to the participants, and procedures proposed to reduce the risks. Point out any procedures, situations, or materials that may be hazardous to personnel and precautions to be exercised. (<http://www.ehs.columbia.edu/>).

The inclusion of women and members of minority groups appropriate to the scientific aims of the dissertation project should be addressed. A minority group is a subset of the U. S. population that is distinguished by racial, ethnic, or cultural heritage, as defined in the [PHS 398 guidelines](#).

Unless a clear and compelling rationale shows that the inclusion of women and minorities is inappropriate to the purpose of the dissertation research, research participants must be recruited from these populations. The composition of the proposed study population with respect to gender and minority status are to be described, and justification for strategies that will be used to recruit and select participants should be provided.

F. Bibliography/References (Consistent format with text and not included in page count.).

Human participants. The student is responsible for adhering to the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services regulations for the protection of human participants (OPRR Reports, 1991). The following points are enumerated and succinctly addressed: a) A description is provided of the proposed involvement of human participants in the dissertation research. The number, age range, and health status of the study population(s) and criteria for inclusion or exclusion in the research are described. In addition, the involvement of vulnerable participants, such as fetuses, pregnant women, children, or institutionalized individuals is justified. b) Potential risks to the participants from study participation are identified, and for each potential risk, a justified assessment of likelihood of occurrence and seriousness of risk is provided. All potential risks (physical, psychological, social, legal, or other) are included. c) The procedures that will be used to minimize the potential risks listed ~~in~~ above, including risk for loss of confidentiality, are described.

Vertebrate animals. The student is responsible for adhering to the U. S. Public Health Service Policy on Humane Care and Use of Laboratory Animals for the protection of animal subjects (National Research Council, 1996).

The following 5 points are enumerated and succinctly addressed:

1. A description of the proposed involvement of animal subjects in the dissertation research is provided. The species, strains, age, sex, and number of animals to be used and criteria for inclusion or exclusion in the research are described.
2. The use of animals, the choice of species, and the numbers proposed for use are justified.
3. The veterinary care that the subjects will receive is discussed.
4. Potential risks from study participation are described, and for each potential risk, a justified assessment of likelihood of occurrence and seriousness of risk is provided. As appropriate, the method of euthanasia to be used is described and justified.
5. The procedures are described that will be used to minimize the potential risks listed above, including the use of analgesics, anesthetics, tranquilizers, and restraining devices to minimize discomfort, distress, pain, and injury.

Dissertation:

The final dissertation product includes the following components: preliminary pages; a summary of the study with reference to appended materials; the dissertation proposal; two manuscripts: one literature review which has been submitted for publication and one submission-ready manuscript reporting findings of the study; IRB and agency approvals; consent form(s); instrument(s) used for data collection; complete, detailed study protocol(s); presentation of data

beyond that included in the manuscript; and curriculum vitae. Each component is described below.

The dissertation should be formatted according to the latest edition of the APA manual. Additionally, since the final dissertation will be submitted to ProQuest, formatting to meet the ProQuest requirements must be followed. These requirements may be found at the School of Graduate Studies website: <https://und.edu/academics/graduate-school/current-students/prepare-submission.html> Students should also use the Format Checklist found at the School of Graduate Studies website: <https://und.edu/academics/graduate-school/current-students/thesis-dissertation.html> prior to submitting the final draft to the committee. A list of formatters or editors is available if you would like to hire someone. Please contact the School of Graduate Studies for a list of names.

1. Preliminary Pages:

Please refer to the “Style Guide” found on the School of Graduate Studies website <https://und.edu/academics/graduate-school/current-students/thesis-dissertation.html> for additional information on preparing the title page through abstract.

- a. **Title page:** The title should convey the substantive area of study, the target population, and the general methods approach. The date indicates the month and year that the Doctor of Philosophy in Nursing degree is conferred; it does not indicate the date the work was completed or the date of the defense.
- b. **Approval page:** This form (Thesis/Dissertation Approval Page) is available on the School of Graduate Studies website and is completed in DocuSign. Because PDF format is required to submit the final dissertation, this approval page may need to be scanned into the final dissertation.
- c. **Acknowledgments page: (Optional)** This page is optional and may be used if the student wishes to express formal recognition and appreciation for extraordinary support that made possible the completion of the research. Grant support for the dissertation should be acknowledged on this page.
- d. **Abstract:** The abstract is the abstract for the entire dissertation and includes the student's name, the title of the dissertation, and the date of graduation. While ProQuest has no word limit for the abstract, it is recommended that the abstract not exceed 350 words. The abstract must not contain tables, figures, graphs, references, or formulas. Symbols and foreign words must be displayed clearly and accurately, with accents and diacritical marks as appropriate. The abstract will be bound with the dissertation and must conform to specified margin requirements. Elements that must be addressed include the following: a brief problem statement, the purpose of the study and specific aims, the design used, data collection methods, brief description of sample, data analysis approach, major findings, and conclusion(s). If an abstract is also required for a manuscript included in the dissertation, it follows the format required by the journal and is placed with the manuscript(s)
- e. **Table of Contents:** The Table of Contents is a list of all elements included in the dissertation, enumerated in sequential order.

2. Proposal:

PHS 398 proposal approved by the dissertation committee is inserted next (Face -Page through Appendices). Use your referencing software to change the format to APA including double spacing.

3. Summary of Study:

The Summary of Study provides an overview of the research project and guides the reader through the organization of the dissertation. It provides a transition between the proposal and the manuscript reporting study results. Any problems encountered or decisions made that resulted in change from what was proposed to what was done are discussed. This section can also reference appended materials.

4. Manuscripts:

Two complete manuscripts are required. The first required manuscript is a review of literature, which is to have been submitted for publication prior to dissertation completion. Acceptance or publication of this manuscript is not required by the time of defense, but it is expected that the student (and any co-authors) will publish the manuscript, even if not accepted initially. The second manuscript will report the study findings and must be ready for submission to a peer-reviewed research journal. If the journal style is other than APA, submit the manuscript in APA style for the dissertation and then convert the style to the required submission format of the journal you selected, using reference management software as appropriate.

5. Appendices:

The appendices provide additional information to that in the proposal and manuscript so that study replication by others is possible. Institutional approvals, consent forms, instruments used for data collection, and detailed study protocol(s) are placed in the appendixes. Any data not included in the results manuscript are presented in tabular or figure format. The appended materials must not repeat information in the proposal or manuscript. Rather, they serve to supplement the major components of the dissertation.

6. Curriculum Vitae:

A curriculum vitae that is current and complete constitutes the final section of the dissertation. It is at the student's discretion if they wish to include the CV in the version that is submitted to ProQuest. The words CURRICULUM VITAE are capitalized and placed in the top center of the first page. The candidate's name, degrees, and credentials appear on the second line, and date on the third line.

The components of the vitae follow the University of North Dakota recommended format with the following headings:

1. Educational Background
2. Professional Experience (including professional, academic, and administrative positions)
3. Teaching

- a. Courses Taught (indicate if undergraduate or graduate).
- b. Graduate Student Advising: Independent Study/Scholarly Project/Design Project Advisor Master's Thesis Committee (Indicate if you served as committee Chair or Member) Doctoral Dissertation Committee (Indicate Role: Chair, Member, or Member-at-Large)
- c. Curriculum Development Activities
4. Service (Include any offices held)
 - a. Department
 - b. College
 - c. University
 - d. Professional Associations
 - e. Community
5. Publications/Performances/Exhibits/Educational products (Please indicate full citations, and the order of multiple authorships.)
 - a. Peer-Reviewed/Juried/Refereed
 - b. Non-Peer-Reviewed/Non-juried/Non-refereed
 - c. Invited
 - d. Other
6. Professional Presentations
 - a. National/International
 - b. Regional
 - c. State/Local
7. Grants and Contracts (Please indicate title of grant/contract, funding agency, if funded or not-funded, amount of funding, time period of funding, and your role on the grant/contract. If not the PI, include the name of the PI).
8. Professional Education/Consultant Activities
9. Honors/Awards

Preliminary Approval:

Once the complete dissertation is prepared, a preliminary approval meeting is to be scheduled with the student and his/her committee members. This meeting may be held virtually. The student will send out the complete dissertation draft to the committee members *no less than 10 business days* prior to the scheduled preliminary approval meeting. Students are encouraged to plan and schedule well in advance for this meeting, as committee members' calendars can be difficult to coordinate.

During the preliminary approval meeting, the committee will provide feedback and recommendations for the student to revise the dissertation prior to the final dissertation defense. The advisor (or designee) will record any recommended changes to be made prior to the final dissertation defense. The committee may decide to sign the Preliminary Approval and Notice of Defense form at the conclusion of the meeting, with the expectation that any recommended revisions will be made prior to final dissertation defense. Alternatively, there may be substantive revisions that the committee is recommending, and they may want to hold a second meeting to assure these revisions are complete before signing the Preliminary Approval and Notice of

Defense form. This form is available at the School of Graduate Studies website <https://und.edu/academics/graduate-school/current-students/forms.html#d56e154--7> and is completed through the DocuSign system. Note: this form must be submitted to the School of Graduate Studies a minimum of two weeks prior to the scheduled final defense date and on or before the Preliminary Approval deadline.

Dissertation Defense:

The final dissertation defense consists of an oral presentation by the student, a public question-and-answer period, a private meeting with the student and committee, deliberation by the committee (without the student present), and announcement of the committee's final decision to the student.

The School of Graduate Studies allows dissertation defenses to be held either in-person or virtually, via Zoom. The Nursing department *strongly encourages* students to be in-person, on campus for their final defense. However, if the dissertation committee all agrees to allow a virtual defense, the student should consult the recommendations for virtual defenses at the School of Graduate Studies website (<https://und.edu/academics/graduate-school/current-students/virtual-defense.html>). Students who plan to be in-person, on campus, should also work with their advisor to set up a Zoom site so that peers and members of the public can also virtually attend the public portion of the defense.

The dissertation defense will begin by the Chair introducing the student, dissertation topic, and members of the committee. The student will then have 20 minutes to present their dissertation research via Powerpoint (or other presentation software). Since the dissertation defense is considered to be the final examination for the PhD, students are expected to prepare their presentation independently. The presentation will be followed by up to 20 minutes of questions and answers with members of the public who are present. Members of the public who are present will then be dismissed (both in-person and online) and the student will meet for approximately 15 – 20 minutes for questions and answers with the dissertation committee. The committee will then dismiss the student and determine if a pass or fail will be assigned to the dissertation. The Chair may also ask for committee input into a letter grade. The student is then invited to rejoin the committee for announcement of the final decision.

Following the dissertation defense, the chair of the dissertation committee will initiate the Final Report on Candidate form at the School of Graduate Studies, via DocuSign (<https://und.edu/academics/graduate-school/current-students/forms.html#d56e154--7>). A letter grade for the final dissertation must be submitted in Campus Connection. In addition, all SP or UP grades assigned in previous semesters, during the course of the dissertation, must be converted to a letter grade using the Removal of In-Progress Grade form, which is an e-form in Campus Connection

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