

Revised 9/30/09, 08/08/12, 06/15/13

Western Connecticut State University  
Department of Education and Educational Psychology

Guidelines for Conducting and Writing the Dissertation Proposal  
For the Doctor of Education in Instructional Leadership

Prepared

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## **Guidelines for Conducting and Writing the Dissertation Proposal**

### **For the Doctor of Education in Instructional Leadership**

The following document is offered as a guide in the preparation of your dissertation proposal in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Education in Instructional Leadership. The following guidelines reflect the expectations of the faculty responsible for evaluating research. Doctoral Candidates and their advisors may suggest alternatives to the format as outlined below.

The dissertation proposal should demonstrate the *scholarly pursuit of inquiry* focused on an identifiable educational problem or phenomenon. Your study should reflect original research and your research question should be feasible, clear, significant, and ethical (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003).

Acceptable style for final presentation of the proposal must follow the most recent edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA) Sixth Edition* (American Psychological Association, 2009). Formatting of the title page and table of contents are specifically indicated in these guidelines, since these instructions vary from one institution to another. Directions regarding margins, reference notes, citations within the text, references, tables, figures, and general typing instructions should coincide with APA style.

The final proposal should be submitted in a 15-20 page document. Sections of your proposal will be adapted for Chapters One, Two, and Three of your five-chapter dissertation. As you formulate your dissertation topic, remember that one job you have is to preempt questions that the reader may formulate as he or she is absorbing your work.

## Pre-Dissertation Advisement

### Purpose

The primary purpose of pre-dissertation advisement during the third year of the EdD program is to discuss the essential question in both conducting and understanding research: **the research problem**. The research problem will indicate the goal, purpose, and overall direction of your dissertation research. In the discussions and initial investigations the need for the study will be identified. If possible, by the end of the semester, you should have developed at least one research question and selected the methodology most appropriate for your research.

During the year we will address:

- The difference between general and more specific research questions;
- How researchers begin to develop research problems;
- The difference between researchable and nonresearchable problems;
- Distinguishing the general research problem from more specific, focused statements and questions;
- The possible research design, population, and variables; and
- The proposal process and specific WCSU requirements.

These topics also will be addressed in your research courses this year.

### Process

You do not register for this as a course and will not receive a grade. This advisement process is provided as a service to assist you in preparing for ED 881: (Dissertation Seminar One). Each student is individually responsible for taking advantage of the opportunities that will be offered during the semester. This advisement process will be enhanced through individual and group discussions.

During the year, you will work in conjunction with your pre-dissertation advisor and the Program Coordinator in order to find a suitable match between you, your primary advisor, and, possibly, a secondary advisor. This decision will be based on your topic and research methodology. WCSU faculty members are permitted to serve as the primary advisor for up to four students in one cohort. The Primary Advisor will serve as the chairperson of your proposal and dissertation defense committees.

### **Dissertation Advisors and Reader**

Students in the Doctor of Education in Instructional Leadership program will have a primary advisor and two secondary advisors who will serve on the student's dissertation committee. Each student will also have an outside reader for his or her dissertation. EdD faculty members will work in conjunction with the Program Coordinator for the grouping of students with primary advisors. These decisions will be made based on matching the area of expertise of the advisor with the content and or methodology being employed by the EdD Candidate.

Candidates will work with their primary advisor to select their secondary advisors and outside reader, and must obtain the approval of the Coordinator of the Program in selecting these individuals. In addition to assisting students in the preparation of their research proposal and dissertation, the advisors will serve on the student's proposal and dissertation defense committees. The outside reader will review and evaluate the dissertation prior to the defense.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

**Primary Advisor.** The student's primary advisor will serve as the chairperson of the student's proposal and dissertation defense committees. The primary advisor will be a full-time faculty, emeritus member of the Department of Education and Educational Psychology at Western Connecticut State University, or an approved adjunct faculty member who holds a

doctoral degree. Any exceptions to this rule must be approved by the Program Coordinator, who will be advised by the EdD Organizational Committee. Each student will work directly with his or her primary advisor, who will guide the student in the development of the dissertation proposal and final dissertation document. It is the student's responsibility to meet with the primary advisor on a regular basis and to follow the recommendations of the primary advisor, submitting all materials for review in a timely fashion in order to complete the proposal and subsequently, the dissertation. The primary advisor will review and return student work within a reasonable amount of time (between 2-4 weeks, depending on the size of the document) and advise the student when the proposal is ready to be shared with the secondary advisors. Throughout the process, the primary advisor must meet with the student on a regular basis (e.g., every other week).

Although secondary advisors will review the proposal and make recommendations to the student regarding possible changes or additions, the student should always seek the guidance of the primary advisor in making any substantial changes to the proposal or dissertation. Any conflicting suggestions for changes or additions from secondary advisors should be brought to the attention of the primary advisor for resolution. The primary advisor will determine when the student's dissertation proposal is ready for the proposal review process and when the dissertation defense can take place. The EdD Candidate will arrange to send the dissertation to the outside reader along with the accompanying rating form. It is the responsibility of the student to be sure that all individuals are informed of the appropriate procedures for the proposal and dissertation process.

**Secondary Advisors (2).** Secondary advisors should be familiar with the student's area of research and be able to offer their advice and expertise on the completion of the proposal and dissertation. Typically, the secondary advisor is an expert in the area of methodology and/or the content of the dissertation. Secondary advisors must be professionals in the field of education or a related field, and hold the appropriate doctoral degree from an accredited institution. Secondary advisors will make recommendations directly to the student for changes in the proposal and/or the need for further inquiry in researching the proposal topic.

Students will make suggestions to and seek recommendations from their primary advisor concerning the selection of secondary advisors. Following this process, students will contact the recommended individuals to request their willingness to serve as secondary advisors. It is the student's responsibility to be in contact with the secondary advisors on a regular basis and to resubmit changes to the primary and secondary advisors in a timely fashion. Secondary advisors need to review and return student work in a timely manner, between 2-4 weeks, depending on the size of the document. It is expected that secondary advisors will attend and participate in the proposal defense and the dissertation defense.

**Outside Reader.** The role of the outside reader is to bring an objective perspective to the dissertation process by reading and assessing the completed dissertation prior to the defense. Outside readers must be individuals who hold a doctoral degree from an accredited college or university and should be able to offer suggestions to the student related to the dissertation.

The student will bring to the primary advisor the names of at least two individuals who might serve as an outside reader of the completed dissertation. The primary advisor will also make suggestions. It is the responsibility of the student to seek the permission of the individual to serve as an outside reader. Outside readers should be fully informed of their responsibilities.

The primary advisor will approve the appointment of the outside reader. When the dissertation is sent to the outside reader, it will have an accompanying rating scale. This rating scale must be completed by the reader and returned to the candidate. A copy of the rating form must be provided to the primary advisor and the Program Coordinator prior to the candidate's dissertation defense.

## Procedures

| Timeline                 | Activity or Policy   |
|--------------------------|--|
| Beginning of Year 3      | 1. Begin Pre-dissertation advisement.  |
| Year 3                   | 2. Work with the Pre-dissertation Advisor to confirm the proposal topic and the steps for completing the proposal.   |
| Summer, Year 3           | 3. Candidates are notified about their primary advisors.   |
| Summer, Year 3           | 4. Complete the Comprehensive Exams.   |
| Year 4                   | 5. Confirm the two secondary advisors with the primary advisor and the Program Coordinator.  |
| Year 4                   | 6. Begin the Seminar process.  |
| Dissertation Seminar 1   | 7. Submit the dissertation proposal to the primary advisor.  |
| Dissertation Seminar 1   | 8. Submit the dissertation proposal to the two secondary advisors for review.  |
| Dissertation Seminar 1-2 | 9. Defend the dissertation proposal.<br>Upon recommendation of the primary advisor, a formal proposal defense will be convened to review the student's proposal and to determine if the student may continue with the next phase of the process, the collection of data and the completion of the dissertation. Students will receive one of two grades at the proposal hearing: (P) Pass or (N) Needs Additional Work. The student must receive a "P" Pass from at least two of the three members of the committee in order to continue with the completion of the dissertation. Students who receive an "N" may have two additional attempts to have their proposal approved. After three attempts without |



| Timeline                        | Activity or Policy   |
|---------------------------------|--|
|                                 | <p>passing the proposal hearing, the student's candidacy in the program will be terminated. Students who receive a "P" may continue, under the guidance of their advisors, with their data collection and the completion of the dissertation. Permission for inclusion of human subjects in the dissertation research must be sought after approval of the proposal and before any data are gathered.</p>  |
| <p>Dissertation Seminar 1-2</p> | <p>10. The approval of the University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) must be obtained in order to begin research with human subjects.</p>  |
| <p>Dissertation Seminar 2</p>   | <p>11. Begin the dissertation research process.</p> <p>12. Upon recommendation of the primary advisor, the program coordinator will be notified that the student is ready to submit his or her dissertation for a formal defense. A date will be scheduled for the formal defense hearing. All members of the student's committee must be present at the defense in person or via electronic communication. Notice will be posted throughout the university via the weekly newsletter and the web site. The dissertation defense will be open to all members of the university community (faculty, staff, and students).</p> |
|                                 | <p>At the dissertation defense, students will receive a grade of (P) Pass, or (F) Fail. The primary advisor and the Secondary Advisors must pass the student for the dissertation to be accepted.</p>  |
|                                 | <p>A student who fails the dissertation defense will only be given one additional opportunity to defend the dissertation. Upon a second failure at the dissertation defense, the student's candidacy in the program will be terminated.</p>  |
|                                 | <p>In the event that the primary advisor is unable to continue to serve, either the primary advisor or the student will notify the Program Coordinator who will make a recommendation to the student for a replacement. If a secondary advisor or outside reader is unable to serve on the committee, either the secondary advisor, outside reader, or student will notify the primary advisor for a recommendation for a replacement.</p>   |

Refer to the Timeline for Graduation for more specific details. Note that the Program Coordinator, Dean for the School of Professional Studies, and Associate Director for the Division of Graduate Studies will register and review the dissertation.

Created December 13, 2005, Revised: January 3, 2006; January 26, 2006 rev., October 6, 2006 rev., February 15, 2010 rev., September 13, 2012

## Proposal Overview

You are responsible for completing and defending your proposal during the first semester of Dissertation Seminar (ED 881). You will begin the proposal by providing the reader with a **general introduction** of the topic area. This provides the true setting for the research project and convinces the reader of its worth. The writer should, as always, write clearly and succinctly. Additional sections should make a definitive **statement of the problem** under study, provide a **rationale for this investigation**, convey the **significance of the research**, and delineate **potential benefits of the proposed research**. The author should indicate how the proposed research falls within the quantitative, qualitative or mixed **design** paradigm and provide a **rationale for choice of methodology**. In the proposal, **key terms** and constructs inherent to the study should be introduced and defined. The proposal should include the **research question(s)** that will direct the study and the corresponding **hypothesis/hypotheses**.

The subsections of the proposal should not overlap. If you find yourself reading the same or similar information in two or more sections, take out the redundancies. The sections of the proposal include: setting the stage and giving a *perspective* for your topic, describing *why* it is important, stating the *issue* or problem, indicating who would *benefit* and how, providing a *glossary* of key terms, and writing a focused *research question(s) and/or hypothesis/hypotheses*.

The student, along with his or her advisor, may alter these headings as needed.

### Proposal Components and Writing Guidelines

1. General introduction of the topic area (Do not make this a direct title of the first section.

The fact that it is an introduction is understood by the reader.)

- a. How will you set the stage for the reader to know about your topic and believe that it is of importance? Often, an historical perspective is provided in this section.
  - b. What is the major topic? (Mathematics anxiety among fourth graders, Reading ability in first graders)
  - c. In general, what are you going to do in this study? This section (and all sections) should be written from the general to the specific. If you want to indicate the specific purpose of your project in the general introduction, write it at the end of this section. Do not begin the section with the pointed details of your exact study.
2. Rationale for selecting the topic
- a. Why is this topic important?
  - b. Why should educators or anyone care about this?
  - c. What do students lose or gain in relation to this topic?
3. Statement of the problem
- a. What exactly is the issue? For example, teachers do not really know the difference between Method A and Method B because . . . . Educators are not sure of the relation between this and that because . . . .
4. Significance of the research
- a. What is so important about this research? What niche does it fill in the literature?  
You are addressing the aptly phrased question- So what?
5. Description of potential benefits of the research
- a. Because you are doing this research, people at your school, in your district, etc. will be able to gain because ...

- b. What is the significance of this topic in relation to the present context?
6. Brief definition of key terms
  - a. In order for us to understand what you are talking about, we have to know what perspectives you are taking about the terms used in your study. Carefully define each important term.
  - b. Do not define terms that are common knowledge and indisputable such as “correlation” or “standard deviation.” Do explain terms that appear to be common knowledge, but that vary with context such as “achievement, “grouping,” “gifted,” “block scheduling.” Define terms that are particular to a domain outside of the general realm of education such as those ideas specifically related to science, music, mathematics, etc.
  - c. Write only in complete sentences rather than phrases. Key terms can be italicized.
  - d. Provide citations for terms.
  - e. Number each item as in a list. See APA (p. 63-64) for appropriate formatting for a numbered list.
7. Set of research questions and hypotheses (if the latter are applicable)
  - a. List all research questions and hypotheses (if the latter are applicable).
  - b. Write the directional or nondirectional hypothesis for each research question.
  - c. Label all groups where applicable.
8. A brief review of the literature to provide the reader with enough information about the topic that he or she logically concludes that the research questions indeed need to be addressed. The reader is provided with a broad understanding of current research related

to the topic under study. This section is best approached using a format moving from the general to the specific. The first paragraph of this section provides a description of topic and sub-topic areas and an overview of the review of the literature. Remembering that the review should provide the reader with a clear focus of the study, a theory supporting the research needs to be explained and related to the topic under investigation. This theoretical information provides the reader with the reason *why* the research project should work, based on a sound well-explained theory.

9. An overview of the methodology provides the reader with a clear understanding of the processes by which the researcher collects and analyses data. Students should accurately describe the subjects, research design, type or types of data, statistical procedures and limitations of the study. These topics will be discussed at length in your research courses. Also consider explaining why you did not select a more commonly applied method or technique. This avoids the formation of questions in the reader's mind.
  - a. Description of the setting, subjects, and sampling procedure
    - i. Be sure to describe the community (i.e., population, type, square miles, socioeconomic status, industry); school district(s) (i.e., number and sizes of schools, racial/ethnic status); school(s) (i.e., number of faculty and students); and class(es) (i.e., number of students, special populations, number in the study).
    - ii. If you are comparing groups of subjects, describe how the groups are equivalent.
    - iii. Indicate your sampling procedure and why you used this process.

- b. Type of data: categorical (nominal) and/or quantitative (ordinal, interval, ratio) or qualitative
  - c. Description of the research design and a figure of the design.
  - d. Data collection procedures
    - i. Describe your process including obtaining the permission for the study, and when and how you collected the data. Think of this as a timeline for the procedures.
    - ii. Description of the treatment, if you have one
  - e. Description of the instruments including the reliability and validity
  - f. Justification of the selected procedure(s) for analyzing collected information including the qualitative method for analysis, or in quantitative studies: probability values, the formula for the statistical analyses, and an explanation of the match between the hypothesis and the statistics to be employed.
  - g. Limitations: *all* limitations pertaining to the study should be described and, when possible, the researcher should explain how the most pertinent threats have been overcome. Each internal and external threat to validity should be described in detail.
  - h. Statement of ethics
10. All candidates completing research must have an approved dissertation proposal and received prior approval from the IRB before beginning research. All candidates must have a valid Human Subjects certificate. The proposal should be approved and attached to the IRB application.

11. A letter of permission from the institution(s) must be obtained and given to your major advisor prior to beginning your study. A copy of the letter(s) must be included with your IRB application or be forthcoming.

### **Assessment of the Dissertation Proposal**

The system for assessing the research proposal and dissertation will be PASS, PASS with Revisions, RESUBMIT, or FAIL.

Key for advisors: A=APPROVE; I=IMPROVE; D=DISAPPROVE; M=MISSING; N/A=NOT APPLICABLE

- \_\_\_\_\_ Title and Title Page (not numbered)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Abstract (page i, numbered as indicated in the Guidelines, no more than 350 words)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Table of Contents
- \_\_\_\_\_ List of headings
- \_\_\_\_\_ List of figures
- \_\_\_\_\_ List of tables/appendices
- Introduction and Identification of the Topic
  - \_\_\_\_\_ General introduction of the topic area (In APA, the introduction does not get labeled as such, it is understood.)
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Rationale for selecting the topic
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Statement of the problem
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Significance of the research
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Potential benefits of the proposed research



\_\_\_\_\_ Brief definition of key terms

## Related Literature

\_\_\_\_\_ Overview describing review of the topics

\_\_\_\_\_ Theory underlying the proposed research

\_\_\_\_\_ Brief review of recent literature pertinent to the proposed topic, including directly and tangentially related studies, followed by a chapter summary

## Methodology

\_\_\_\_\_ Research question(s) and/or hypothesis or hypotheses (if the latter are applicable)

\_\_\_\_\_ Description of the setting and the subjects

\_\_\_\_\_ Instrumentation

\_\_\_\_\_ Description of the research design and treatment (if the latter is applicable)

\_\_\_\_\_ Description and justification of the statistical analysis procedures, including probability values, if appropriate (Sometimes, the research design and analyses sections are combined.)

\_\_\_\_\_ Data collection procedures and timeline

\_\_\_\_\_ Limitations of the study (Refer to your research design course.)

\_\_\_\_\_ Statement of ethics

\_\_\_\_\_ References- APA Format

\_\_\_\_\_ Appendixes- Tables, Charts, Graphs, Illustrations, Examples, and Instrumentation (if permission is granted)

\_\_\_\_\_ Human Subjects Review and Informed Consent Forms

## Writing Guidelines

All research proposals should conform to the following guidelines:

1. Font: Use Times or Times Roman font with Font size = 12.
2. Margins: Margins should measure exactly one inch on all sides and text should be left justified except for centered headings. Manuscripts with a one and a quarter inch margin on the left are made that way in order to be bound. You will not be binding your proposal, keep the margins at one inch on all sides.
3. Pagination: The title page receives no page number. The next page, the Abstract, should be numbered using Roman Numerals beginning with i. The next page should include the Table of Contents, also numbered using Roman Numerals. All pages, beginning with the Introduction, should be consecutively numbered in Arabic numbers. This form of pagination should be maintained throughout the document and all numbers should appear centered on the bottom of the page.
4. Spacing: Use double spacing throughout the document.
5. Headings: Follow APA guidelines for the format for all headings.
6. Cover Page: An example cover page is located in Appendix A of these Guidelines. Employ this specific format only.
7. Abstract: The abstract is to be no longer than 350 words and should not include any references.
8. Table of Contents: An example Table of Contents exists at the end of these Guidelines. Accurately label all sections, pages, references, tables, figures, and appendices.
9. List of Tables: Whichever is longer, the List of Tables or the List of Figures comes first. You might not have the latter. Pagination of the Table of Contents continues using

Roman numerals. There should be no italics, use of bold or underlining in the Table of Contents.

10. Proposal Text: Number all pages consecutively beginning with Arabic Numeral 1 for the first page. Follow APA guidelines for headings. Use double spacing.
11. References: The references should not be confused with a bibliography. According to the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, Sixth Edition (2009)*, the former indicates the exact citations used throughout the manuscript, while the latter is a suggested reading list. The author should provide complete references for all materials used in the written description of the research project. The reference list should be checked by the student to assure that there is a one-to-one correspondence between all citations in the text and all items listed in the references. The format for all references should follow APA guidelines as established in the manual. Remember to use a *hanging indent*. Do not follow old or incomplete APA guides as the APA manual is updated on a regular basis. Number all pages of the references.
12. Appendices: Appendices are indicated by letter and are followed by the title of the appendix (see appendix at the end of this document). They are alphabetized in sequence the first time one is mentioned in the text. They appear after the References in the order in which they are mentioned in the text. Remember to number all the pages of the appendixes. Each Appendix should have a cover page stating the Appendix letter and the title of the Appendix.

## **Writing Suggestions**

Your proposal will be assessed according to the degree to which the main elements listed in this guide are included into a coherent manuscript. There will be variations in chapter subheadings according to the individual and agreed upon by the advisors. Please be certain that all grammar and syntax have been checked as well as the content since these facets will be included in the assessment process. Proof read your work to include the following information.

### **Organization**

1. Include appropriate pagination as indicated in these Guidelines.
2. Clearly define all terms in the Definition of Terms section and define all terms as you use them in your text.
3. Number all pages according to the specifications in these Guidelines
4. Appropriately fasten all submissions with a paper clip or paper fastener. Do not use the clear plastic project covers since they easily slide away from the document.

### **Theory**

5. Accurately describe a theory in relation to your question.
6. Link the theory specifically to the purpose of your study.

### **Review of the Literature**

7. A relevant review of the literature must be provided.
8. Include approximately 10 primary studies in this section.
9. Provide enough detail to support the point you are trying to make.

### **Research Question and Hypothesis**

10. The research question should be clear and phrased as a question.
11. End the research question with a question mark.

12. Label each hypothesis.
13. Use the appropriate heading format.
14. Label the groups in each research question and hypothesis.
15. Write a null, directional, or non-directional hypothesis.
16. Be sure your hypothesis relates to your literature review.

### **Format and Writing Style**

17. A dissertation proposal is considered to be formal writing. Your style of writing should not be informal. Proof read your work to be sure you are not writing in an informal manner such as the way you talk to a friend. Remember that while Spellcheck is very important, it does not proofread.
18. Write in the third person. Do not use the words “I” or “we.” (see APA, Chapters 2 and 3). With few exceptions, use the same tense consistently throughout your document. Your proposal is written in the future tense but the entire dissertation should be written in the past tense.
19. Remove unnecessary spaces in the text. APA requires TWO spaces after a period or punctuation at the **end of a sentence**. Depending on your typing style, learn how to use Find and Replace in the Edit menu to assist you in correcting spacing issues.
20. Use appropriate spacing for APA citations.
21. Add appropriate references where needed.
22. Numerals one (1) through nine (9) are always written as full words; 10 and above are written as numbers, EXCEPT when the two are both used in the same sentence. When that occurs, use either form but be consistent throughout the sentence.

23. A page number indicating where the quote is to be found in the original text must accompany all quotes.
24. There should be a clear beginning, middle, and end to all sections of the proposal.
25. Each sentence and paragraph should be clearly written and logically linked to the surrounding text.
26. Always write in complete paragraphs. A paragraph must contain more than one sentence.
27. Provide transitions between all sentences and paragraphs.
28. Clearly define all terms.
29. Margins should be left justified. Use double spacing. All papers should be dark quality copies.
30. Number all pages, including the references and appendices, refer to these Guidelines for information on pagination.
31. Check your work to eliminate all widows and orphans (W/O). Your word processing program will provide protection from W/O, but you also need to review all text before printing it.
32. Avoid qualifiers: “a *pretty* good book,” “a *little* unrealistic.” Just use direct language: “a good book,” “unrealistic.”
33. Avoid colloquialisms: “If you just *hang in there*, you’ll understand my story.”
34. Do not use contractions and greatly limit your use of abbreviations. The latter are rarely acceptable.

35. Do not use the following phrase- “The students being used in the study . . .” Not only is this awkward, but it also sounds unethical. Instead, employ the phrase- “The students participating in the study . . . .”
36. Try not to use the same word in close proximity to itself EXCEPT in the research questions, hypotheses, and when reporting serial data. Otherwise vary the words, e.g., described, illustrated, revealed, explained, verified, evidenced, hypothesized, reported, analyzed, synthesized, verified, or students, children, adolescents, youth, learners, and so forth.

### **Grammar and Syntax**

37. Be sure your writing style is clear and the writing mechanics such as grammar, punctuation, spelling, etc. are accurate.
38. The term “data” should always appear as a plural noun.
39. “Then” means *next* and “than” is used as a *comparison*.
40. Do NOT use "while" or "since" when you mean "whereas." Technically, "while" and "since" refer to time, whereas "whereas" refers to "conversely" or "on the other hand."
41. Do NOT use "which" when you mean "that."
42. Always check on your use of “their,” they’re” and “there,” as well as “its” and “it’s.”
43. Be certain that all verb tenses are consistent. Do not change tenses mid-paragraph let alone mid-sentence.
44. Pronouns should agree with their antecedents. Do **not** write “The child picked up their books.”

45. Use inclusive language. It is best to use a plural form such as “they” or “them” instead of “him” or “her.” Do not use the form “him/her” or “s/he.” It is preferable to use “him or her,” “he or she.”
46. Check the appropriate use of all possessives including possessive plurals. “The students’ tests were above the specified mastery level.” “The student’s test was above the specified mastery level.”
47. Avoid ending sentences in prepositions (for, to, at, etc.). “He returned his books to the library,” rather than, “The library was the room he returned his books to.”
48. Use “who” when referring to people, not “that.” “The students who left the classroom were finished with their work.” Do NOT use "who" when you mean "whom."
49. Check the use of all commas, colons, and semi-colons.
50. With few exceptions, use the same tense consistently throughout your document.
51. Check your dictionary for the difference between effect (effective) and affect (affective).
52. “Whether” should be followed by “or not.”

## **References**

53. You are ethically responsible for reading all books, papers, chapters, and articles being cited within the paper and subsequently included in the reference list.
54. Verify that all cited work is accompanied by a complete reference at the end of the manuscript. All references will be documented as they are presented in the text and will be included in the references, using APA format (American Psychological Association, 2009). Know when to cite the entire reference and when to use et al.



55. Use an ampersand (&) within parentheses and in the list of references at the end of the dissertation.
56. ALWAYS cite multiple references in ALPHABETICAL order, particularly inside parentheses.

### **Western Connecticut State University's Writing Lab**

The Writing Lab is supported by the English Department on the main campus of Western Connecticut State University. Located in Berkshire 106, the Writing Lab is a place where WestConn students can obtain help to improve their writing skills. The Lab has regularly scheduled daytime and evening hours. For further information, please contact the Writing Lab at 203-837-8728.

### **Ethical Considerations When Conducting Your Study**

All students are responsible for conducting their research projects in an ethical manner (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003; Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). This protocol takes the form of obtaining a letter of permission from an administrator in the designated school district(s) such as a superintendent or principal and submitting a Human Subjects and Vertebrate Animals form known as the HUM-1 Form to the IRB at WestConn (refer to [www.wcsu.edu/irb](http://www.wcsu.edu/irb) for additional information).

The letter of permission needs to state that the administrator is fully informed about the research project, that he or she has been assured that it will be conducted in an ethical manner, that all confidentiality will be honored, and that permission has been granted to conduct the research within the specified time frame.

## References

- American Psychological Association. (2009). *Publication manual of the American psychological association* (6th ed.). Washington, DC: Author.
- Fraenkel, J. R., & Wallen, N. E. (2003). *How to design and evaluate research in education* (5th ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Gall, M. D., Gall, J. P., & Borg, W. R. (2007). *Educational research: An introduction* (8th edition). New York: Longman.

Appendix A

Sample Committee Approval Page for Doctoral Proposal



*School of Professional Studies  
Department of Education and Educational Psychology  
Doctor of Education in Instructional Leadership*

**Committee Designation  
for  
Doctoral Dissertation**

**Degree: Doctor of Education**

Name:

Date:

Title of Approved Proposal:

Recommended Committee:

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|                 |           |      |
|-----------------|-----------|------|
| Primary Advisor | Signature | Date |
|-----------------|-----------|------|

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|                                    |           |      |
|------------------------------------|-----------|------|
| Secondary Advisor Committee Member | Signature | Date |
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| Secondary Advisor Committee Member | Signature | Date |
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|                     |           |      |
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| Program Coordinator | Signature | Date |
|---------------------|-----------|------|

Note: Any change in the committee must be approved by the Program Coordinator.

Appendix B

Sample Cover Page for Doctoral Proposal

(5 single spaces)

PLACE YOUR TITLE IN UPPER CASE LETTERS HERE, DOUBLE SPACE IF THE TITLE HAS MORE THAN ONE LINE, AND CENTER ALL TEXT

(5 single spaces)

Indicate Your Name in Upper and Lower Case Letters

(5 single spaces)

Indicate Your Prior Degree, The Institution of the Degree, The Year Received  
Indicate Your Prior Degree, The Institution of the Degree, The Year Received  
(If you have more than one prior degree, list each)

(5 single spaces)

A Dissertation Proposal  
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Education in Instructional Leadership  
in the  
Department of Education and Educational Psychology  
at  
Western Connecticut State University  
200\_\_

## Appendix C

### Sample Abstract Page for Doctoral Proposal

PLACE YOUR TITLE IN UPPER CASE LETTERS HERE, DOUBLE SPACE IF THE TITLE  
HAS MORE THAN ONE LINE, AND CENTER ALL TEXT  
(2 single spaces)

Indicate Your Name in Upper and Lower Case Letters, Undergraduate Degree, Graduate Degree

Western Connecticut State University

Place the text for your abstract here. This text is not to exceed 350 words. No references  
should be included in an abstract.



## Appendix D

### Sample Table of Contents for Doctoral Proposal

## Sample Table of Contents

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