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FACULTY DISSERTATION HANDBOOK

ED.D. Program in Educational Leadership



FACULTY DISSERTATION HANDBOOK



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I. Qualifications to Serve on a Dissertation Committee

There are three types of committee members: the chair, the second reader, and the community partner (third reader). The second reader may be a Core or Affiliated faculty member.

1. Core Faculty members

They are willing to fulfil the expectations of doctoral program members. A core faculty member:

- is willing to fulfil the expectations of doctoral program members to serve as doctoral faculty advisors
- embraces a professional scholar-change agent identity that is committed to a positive "graduate" or "doctoral" culture, that connects program learning with professional practice
- promotes distributed leadership, and a collegial network and growth/development environment that seeks to facilitate change, collective impact, and future outcomes
- builds trustworthiness and partnerships, actively engages and mentors others in both formal and informal contexts
- possesses innovation and a "real-world application" orientation toward teaching excellence, while building confidence and eliminating barriers to student learning
- possesses a scholarly-practitioner orientation toward systematic inquiry, research, and scholarship, rigor, reflexivity, relevance, findings, and action pieces
- adheres to program values of equity, inclusion, student success, and social justice in support of diverse environments
- is conversant and up to date on educational discourses, frames of study, designs, and thematic domains, solving pragmatic and complex problems of practice and intervention
- active in projects, programs, agendas, collaborative teamwork, policies, grants, funding, and other resources seeking to research and/or promote/implement a change initiative, organizational impact, and renewal in educational, work, and other community-based settings
- demonstrates leadership, and is active in building interdisciplinary and collaborative communities of practice in local and regional contexts
- demonstrates commitment, integrity, intentionality, responsibility, credibility, humility, and empathy during the normal course of academic work and everyday life

2. Affiliated Faculty Members

To be an **Affiliated Faculty**, the faculty member must meet the following qualifications;

- Have expertise relevant to the program
- Have earned a relevant doctoral degree from an accredited institution of higher education, and
- Be a tenured or tenure-track campus faculty member or be recommended by a PK-12 or community college partner in the program

The term of appointment for an Affiliated faculty member is **3 years**.

3. Qualifications to Serve as a Committee Member

A. Qualifications to Serve as Dissertation Chair

To serve as a Dissertation Chair, the faculty member **must be a Core member of the Ed.D. Faculty Group**. The term of appointment for a Core faculty member is 5 years.

The qualifications for being a CORE faculty member include:

- Have expertise in theory, research, policy, or practice related to PK-12 or community college (higher education) leadership
- Exhibit a strong professional record of scholarly publication pertinent to educational leadership or to the theoretical or methodological underpinnings thereof
- Have an earned doctoral degree in an appropriate discipline from an accredited institution of higher education
- Be tenured or have a tenure-track appointment at CSUSB
- Have teaching experience at the graduate level, and
- Have demonstrated ability to direct others in research activities, including master's theses or doctoral dissertations

Note: A FERPing faculty member can serve as chair but cannot accept new students who will finish beyond the faculty member's five-year FERP. (See Dissertation Chair/Committee Chart in Appendix A)

******Only in rare instances should there be a change in a student's Dissertation Chair, and the change must be discussed and approved by the Ed.D. Faculty Program Director.***

B. Qualifications to Serve on Dissertation Committee as the Second Reader

A core faculty member or an Affiliated Faculty member can serve as a second reader. The role of a second reader on a dissertation committee is to provide critical feedback, scholarly support, and an additional perspective on the student's research. While the chair typically provides the primary guidance and supervision, the second reader serves several key functions:

1. Scholarly Oversight and Feedback

- Reviews drafts of the dissertation to assess the quality, clarity, and rigor of the research.
- Offers constructive feedback on research design, analysis, interpretation, and writing.

2. Support and Balance

- Acts as a secondary mentor, offering a different viewpoint or area of expertise.
- Helps ensure that the student's work is intellectually sound and well-supported.

3. Participation in Milestones

- Participates in major committee meetings such as the proposal defense and final defense.
- May be involved in reviewing key documents or suggesting revisions before the student moves forward.

4. Evaluator and Advocate

- Evaluates the student's performance and final product alongside the chair and other committee members.
- Supports the student's academic and professional growth while maintaining objectivity.

C. Qualifications to Serve on Dissertation Committee as the Third Reader (Community Partner)

The third reader (community partner) must have a doctorate from an accredited university and have some content knowledge in the subject area of the dissertation. Membership as the third reader must be approved by the Ed.D. Program Directors through the submission of the Dissertation Committee Form.

II. Compensation for Dissertation Members

A tenure/tenure track faculty member shall only chair **two** dissertations per cohort at the same time. The Faculty Program Director must approve any additional dissertation chair work above and beyond the two students per cohort. **Please note that, “Students may begin work on the dissertation only after advancing to candidacy” which is demonstrated by the passing of the comps.**

A. Serving as a Dissertation Chair

Compensation for serving as a Dissertation Chair or on a Dissertation Committee is as follows:

- Dissertation chair, three (3) units as follows: one (1) unit after the successful preliminary proposal and two (2) units after the successful final dissertation defense.
- A tenure/tenure-track faculty member shall only chair two dissertations per cohort at the same time. The Faculty Program Director(s) must approve any additional dissertation chair work above and beyond two students per cohort.

B. Serving as a Second Reader

- A CSU Faculty serving as the Dissertation committee’s 2nd Reader will earn half (.5) units after the successful completion of the final dissertation defense.

C. Serving as a Third Reader

- There will be no compensation for external members serving on dissertation committees, which include CSU MPPs or members of the PK-12 and Community College faculty/administration. Certificates of recognition will be awarded to external committee members. The Certificates will honor them as “special volunteer faculty appointed for service on a dissertation committee. Additionally, these external committee members will be invited to join the Ed.D. Program. Advisory Board.

***Faculty members chairing dissertations will not be issued summer contracts. The total compensation for chairing a dissertation is three units of release time.

***Faculty members shall not be permitted to use units to release them for an entire semester.

****Dissertation Chairs for Cohorts 13 or below:*

Dissertation Chairs who are responsible for administering the students’ qualifying exam for cohorts 13 and before will receive four (4) units for each dissertation they chair. Units are earned as follows: (1) unit after the qualifying exam, one (1) unit after the proposal defense, and two (2) units after the final defense.

- Assigned time may also be allocated for various program support functions, and the program director must approve it.

III. Roles and Responsibilities

A. Roles and Responsibilities of the Dissertation Chair

First Year – Spring Semester

- Discuss emerging areas of research interest with the student
- Explore connections to relevant CSUSB alumni research
- Identify potential community partners or professional sites for applied research
- Guide the student in identifying potential faculty members for the dissertation committee
- Review the Dissertation Committee Approval process and expectations
- Complete and submit the student's Year 1 Annual Review Form to the Office of Doctoral Studies
- Review and submit the finalized Year 1 Program Plan to the Office of Doctoral Studies
- Review the timeline and submission procedures for:
 - Dissertation Committee Approval Form (due by the end of Year 1)
 - Application to take the Qualifying Examination (to be submitted early in Year 2)

These early conversations help establish a foundation of support and foster alignment between student interests, faculty expertise, and program expectations. Once a Chair is selected, the Dissertation Chair will assume the primary academic advising role for the remainder of the program.

For the most current form deadlines and submission instructions, students should refer to the Ed.D. Program website or consult with the Program Specialist.

The Dissertation Chair: Lead Faculty Advisor

Per Executive Order 991, Article 7.3.3, the Dissertation Chair must be a member of the CSUSB Ed.D. core faculty and serve as the student's primary academic advisor once the Dissertation Committee is officially approved. The Chair provides long-term guidance throughout the research process and ensures alignment with university and program expectations. Chairs are responsible for ensuring that students do not begin dissertation work before formal advancement to candidacy. Per **Executive Order 991, Article 10.3**, "*Students may begin work on the dissertation only after advancing to candidacy.*" This includes any substantive research, data collection, or analysis related to the dissertation study. This includes assisting the student in identifying appropriate committee members—at least one core or affiliated faculty member and one qualified community partner, by EO 991 guidelines. The Chair should also reinforce the importance of proper protocol when forming the committee and advise students to communicate professionally with any faculty previously consulted.

To ensure equitable faculty workload and high-quality mentorship, faculty may serve as Chair for no more than two dissertation committees per cohort. Faculty may request an exception to this limit via petition to the Program Director. Some activities include:

- Exploring some potential committee members (those who hold their doctoral or terminal degrees and can contribute in some way to the doctoral student's dissertation work). Committee members do not have to come from the CSUSB Ed.D. Program faculty list and they can come from faculty across the CSU campuses and the community (See Qualifications for Committee Members above)

- Reinforcing the importance of following appropriate protocol for establishing the student's dissertation committee and communicating with any other faculty member they have interviewed as possible members on their committee
- Please note that, "Students may begin work on the dissertation only after advancing to candidacy" which is demonstrated by the passing of the comps.
- Overseeing the development of the Literature Review (Chapter 2) and working with the committee in developing the 3 Qualifying Examination Questions.
- Overseeing the administration of the students' Qualifying Examination, scoring the exam, and reporting the status of the exam to the Ed.D. Program administration
- Overseeing the completion of all dissertation chapters, the preliminary proposal defense, and the final dissertation defense.
- Exploring some potential workshops/conferences/webinars/educational organizations/educational journals that might provide additional resources for the student's intellectual and personal growth
- Exploring some scholarship/funding/award opportunities and developing a plan for completing the application(s)
- Reviewing and completing the Ed.D. student/faculty research and travel application, and the graduate studies research and travel application, once a research plan and scholarly opportunities have been identified for students who have applied for these funds
- Conducting the student's year 2 and year 3 program plan, annual review
- Signing all doctoral program forms when applicable
- Supporting the development of the potential direction for the student's "research inquiry" as well as the research question(s)
- Exploring potential problems of practice in the school/organization/community that might provide a setting and context for the student's inquiry, while presenting the possibility of "transformation" because of the student's inquiry
- Discussing potential "products" or "deliverables" that might emerge from the student's inquiry (post-dissertation) that might serve to transform the context(s) or setting(s) associated with the student's research inquiry
- Ensuring that the student defends their dissertation proposal first with approval from all committee members before submitting their IRB application for approval
- Thoroughly reading the student's IRB application, providing suggestions for corrections/modifications, and ensuring the student includes the dissertation proposal form with committee signatures before you sign and the student submits it for review
- Letting the Doctoral Studies Office know one semester in advance when the student expects to graduate
- Ensuring that the writing of the dissertation is of high quality and free from grammatical and syntax errors before submission to ScholarWorks

B. Roles and Responsibilities of the Dissertation Committee

The role of the dissertation committee is as follows:

- Reviewing the literature review of the dissertation and offering feedback and assisting in developing questions for the student's Qualifying Exam
- Reviewing and scoring the Literature Review and Qualifying Exam
- Reviewing chapters 1-3 of the dissertation upon the request of the chair and providing feedback related to the students' work
- Attending a dissertation proposal defense session
- Reviewing chapters 1-5 of the dissertation at the request of the chair and providing feedback related to the student's work
- Attending a dissertation defense session
- Signing all doctoral program forms when applicable

****Note: Changes in membership of Dissertation Committees must be documented in the appropriate forms and communicated to the Ed.D. Faculty Program Director.*

IV. Dissertation Process

1. Establish Dissertation Committee
2. Share the Timeline for Completion of the Dissertation in 3 years (see Attachment A)
3. Share the Dissertation Format (see Attachment B)
4. Assist the student in completing Chapter 2, Literature Review
5. After the Chair is satisfied with the Literature Review, share it with the committee for their feedback
6. Make sure the student files the form scheduling the Qualifying Examination
7. Oversee the completion of the Qualifying Examination
8. Make sure the student files the form upon completion of the Qualifying Examination
9. Assist the student in completing Chapters 1 and 3
10. Share the draft of Chapters 1 and 3 with the committee for feedback and establish that the committee feels the student is ready to defend the proposal
11. Schedule and hold Preliminary Proposal Defense
12. Make sure the student files the form scheduling the Preliminary Proposal Defense (for cohorts 13 and prior contact edd@csusb.edu) [Form 6](#)
13. Make sure the student files the form indicating that the student passed the proposal defense
14. Assist the student in filing the IRB application (including ensuring your CITI certification is current)
15. Assist the student in making any changes needed to pass the IRB review
16. Assist the student in collecting, organizing, and analyzing their data
17. Assist the student in completing Chapters 4 and 5.
18. Share the draft of Chapters 4 and 5 with the committee for feedback and establish that the

- committee feels the student is ready for the final defense
19. Schedule and hold the final defense; work with the program office in publicizing the defense date and time
(for cohorts 13 and prior contact edd@csusb.edu) [Form 9](#)
 20. Make sure the student files the form for scheduling the Final Dissertation Defense
 21. Make sure the student makes any final changes requested to be made during the defense
 22. Make sure the student files the forms for defending the dissertation and meets the requirements of Graduate Studies
 23. Celebrate! Attend Commencement so you can hood your student

V. Forms

The link for all current forms related to the dissertation are numbered Form 6-Form 10 and can be found on our website [here](#).

Forms from older cohorts (Cohort 13 and prior) can be accessed upon request at edd@csusb.edu.

ATTACHMENT A

2nd Spring	2nd Spring	2nd Spring	2nd Summer to 2nd Fall	2nd Fall	2nd Fall to 3rd Spring	3rd Spring	3rd Spring
Mid-February	First week of March	Right after Proposal Defense (1 st week of March)	Between June and October	Between November and December	Between December and January	No later than the first week of March	2 nd week of March
All Three Chapters Completed and sent to Committee for Review 2 weeks before the Proposal Defense	Proposal Defense	Online Application and submit CITI Certification for you and Dissertation Chair Approval may take 2+ months. IRB does not review new protocols during summer.	After IRB Approved, Collect Data	Enter Data into File, Clean Data, Perform Data Analysis	Write Chapters 4 and 5	Distribute Entire Dissertation to Committee for Review 2 weeks before the Final Defense	Final Defense

Dissertation Timeline for On-Time Graduation (3 years!)

Edited: CB 08/13/2025

ATTACHMENT B

CSUSB Ed.D. Dissertation Template

Chapter 1: Introduction

Problem Statement

Defines the problem of practice in the field of education that this research study will explore and includes citations to validate the importance of this study.

Purpose Statement

Provides a clear statement of the purpose of the study. Begins with “The purpose of this study is to...”

Research Questions or Hypotheses

Delineates the specific questions this study will attempt to answer. Limit the number of research questions to no more than 2 or 3.

Significance of the Study

Explain in detail why this study is important. Use citations from other studies and research scholars to validate why this study is significant to the field.

Theoretical Framework/Underpinnings (Introduce in Chapter 1 – Deeper explanation in the concept covered in the lit review and its use outlined in Chapter 3)

Defines the perspective from which the researcher is exploring the problem chosen for the study. For example, if looking at college completion rates for first-generation students, the researcher might be using frameworks such as social capital or cultural capital, to name a few.

Assumptions

For qualitative research, assumptions identify factors potentially influential to the study that you cannot or do not intend to control. The researcher should discuss how they plan to verify (if possible) these assumptions. Examples of assumptions include, but are not limited to, the honesty or integrity of participant responses, the accuracy of or the utility of instruments used in the study, the inclusion criteria for participants, and the participant's motivation for participating in the study.

Delimitations

Explains the self-imposed limitations of the study; for example, only looking at public universities rather than including both private and public universities.

Definitions of Key Terms

Defines the specific terms in the study using cited definitions from the literature.

Summary

Includes the main points that have been covered in chapter 1 and an introduction to what is going to be covered in chapter 2.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The literature review for a dissertation begins with an introduction to the study. It is a synthesis of existing research studies that provides a comprehensive summary and analysis of the methodologies, data collection, findings, and conclusions of studies that are directly related to the problem and purpose of the study being proposed. In addition, the discussion of the theoretical framework is provided in the literature review. The

purpose of the literature review is to identify gaps in the research and pinpoint areas for future study.

Comparison of Studies.

The literature review should not only summarize existing studies but also compare and contrast them. This includes analyzing similarities and differences in research designs, participant populations, data collection methods, findings, and conclusions. Explicitly discussing points of convergence and divergence strengthens the argument for the present study.

Practitioner Tradition.

The literature review should situate the study within the practitioner tradition of educational leadership. This means highlighting how the problem of practice has been experienced, addressed, or left unresolved in real-world educational settings, and connecting existing scholarship to the applied challenges practitioners face.

Problem Statement and Purpose of the Proposed Study

Use the same language as was used in Chapter 1.

Establishing the Basis for the Study.

The literature review should demonstrate how the body of research collectively establishes a convincing rationale for the study. This includes showing where prior studies fall short, identifying gaps in knowledge or practice, and making a clear case for why this research is needed in the field of educational leadership.

Topical Headings and Subheadings

Summary

Includes the main points from the literature review that are relevant to the proposed study and an introduction to the methodology section.

Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology **Quantitative**

Research Design

Provides an overview of how the research for this study was conducted.

Research Setting

Describes the context of the research, where and when.

Research Sample

Explains who participated in the study (demographics) and how they were selected or what data was used, where it was located, and how it was accessed.

Research Data

Describes the type of data that was used for the study.

Data Collection

Describes how the data was collected or accessed, including timeframes and methods. For example, data mining, surveys, interviews, and observations to name a few.

Instrumentation and Materials.

This section should identify and describe the instruments, equipment, or materials used in the study. For example, surveys, assessments, software programs, databases, or other measurement tools should be detailed, including evidence of

their reliability and validity. If instruments were adapted, the adaptation process should be explained.

Data Analysis

Explains how the data was analyzed – what statistical methods were used in the analysis.

Validity and Trustworthiness/Reliability

Discusses the methods used to establish the validity and reliability of data collection methodology.

Positionality of the Researcher

Discusses any biases the researcher may have had towards the research study and explains how those biases were addressed. (Generally used for qualitative research studies).

Although positionality is most often associated with qualitative research, it is also important in quantitative studies. The researcher should identify any potential biases or assumptions that could influence the design, data collection, analysis, or interpretation of results, and describe the steps taken to minimize these influences.

Ethical Considerations.

All research should include a clear discussion of the ethical protocols followed. This includes Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, informed consent procedures, data privacy and confidentiality protections, and the researcher's responsibility to protect participants from harm. Any potential conflicts of interest should also be addressed.

Summary

Summarizes the main points of the chapter and introduces what will be covered in the next chapter.

Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology **Qualitative**

Research Design

Provides an overview of how the research for this study was conducted.

Research Paradigm and Tradition.

The study should clearly identify and justify its research paradigm (e.g., constructivist, interpretivist, critical) and research tradition (e.g., case study, phenomenology, grounded theory). This explanation establishes the philosophical and methodological foundation for the study.

Research Setting

Describes the context of the research, where and when.

Research Sample

Explains who participated in the study (demographics) and how they were selected or what data was used, where it was located, and how it was accessed.

Researcher Role.

The role of the researcher in relation to participants should be explained, including any potential influence on data collection and interpretation. This includes describing the researcher's interactions with participants, the steps taken to minimize bias, and the ethical responsibilities in the research relationship.

Research Data

Describes the type of data that was used for the study.

Data Collection

Describes how the data was collected or accessed, including timeframes and methods. For example, data mining, surveys, interviews, and observations to name a few.

Data Analysis

Explains how the data was analyzed – what statistical methods were used in the analysis.

Triangulation. *To enhance trustworthiness, multiple sources of data or methods of data collection (e.g., interviews, observations, documents) should be used where appropriate. This section should explain how triangulation was applied to strengthen the credibility and validity of the findings.*

Tracking Emerging Understandings. *Qualitative research often involves evolving insights. This section should describe the strategies used to track and document emerging understandings during the analysis process, such as maintaining analytic memos, journals, or audit trails that capture the researcher's reflections and decision-making.*

Validity and Trustworthiness/Reliability

Discusses the methods used to establish the validity and reliability of data collection methodology.

Positionality of the Researcher

Discusses any biases the researcher may have had towards the research study and explains how those biases were addressed. (Generally used for qualitative research studies).

Credible Witness.

In qualitative research, the researcher serves as a credible witness to the lived experiences of participants. This section should describe how the researcher's interpretations are grounded in the data, supported by evidence such as direct quotations, field notes, and triangulation of sources.

Ethical Considerations.

This section should address how ethical issues were identified and managed in the study. This includes Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, informed consent, participant confidentiality, data security, and respect for participants' rights throughout the research process.

Summary

Summarizes the main points of the chapter and introduces what will be covered in the next chapter.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction.

This chapter begins with a restatement of the purpose of the study, the research questions, and a brief description of the research design. This introduction orients the reader to how the findings are organized and prepares them for the presentation of results.

Sample Demographics

Analyzes the demographic information of the final participants of the study.

Results of the Study Using Descriptive Data by Research Question

Describes what was found through the data collection process for each research question. Tables and statistical analyses are provided in this section.

*The **quantification** of data is presented in a manner that is both sufficient and appropriate for addressing each research question. The statistical and descriptive techniques used are adequate for supporting valid interpretations.*

***Variations from the Proposed Study.** Any deviations from the original research plan are described in this section. This includes changes in sampling, data collection procedures, or analysis strategies. Each variation is explained and justified, along with a discussion of how it may affect the interpretation of findings.*

***Data Accuracy and Rigor.** The findings are presented with careful attention to accuracy and methodological rigor. Data handling procedures, such as coding, entry, and analysis checks, are documented to ensure the integrity of results.*

Justification of Findings.

Interpretations of the data are supported directly by evidence presented in tables, figures, and narratives. The meanings and conclusions drawn are explicitly tied to the data, ensuring transparency and credibility.

Qualitative Researcher as Credible Witness.

In qualitative research, the researcher's role as a credible witness is essential. This section should describe how the researcher's observations, interpretations, and interactions with the data are presented in a trustworthy manner, supported by triangulation, reflexivity, and consistency across findings.

Summary

The main points related to the findings of the study are summarized, and an introduction to the next chapter is provided.

Chapter 5: Recommendations and Conclusions

Overview

A brief discussion of the purpose of the study and problem statement (as written in Chapter 1) and a summary of the research methodology are provided.

Interpretation of Findings.

The conclusions should address each research question (or hypothesis) posed in Chapter 1. For each research question, the findings presented in Chapter 4 should be revisited and interpreted, ensuring that all aspects of the study's purpose are fully addressed.

Recommendations for Educational Leaders

Based on the data analysis, the recommendations for the problem studied is presented. In addition, a comparison of the study's findings and the findings and recommendations made in the literature review presented in Chapter 2 is provided, including citations.

Next Steps for Educational Reform

This section answers “now what?” Discusses what needs to happen or what needs to be implemented as a result of the findings of this study.

Recommendations for Future Research

As a result of this study, what new questions have emerged about this topic that can be the focus of new research studies?

Scope of Generalizations.

Any generalizations drawn from the findings must be confined to the population from which the study’s sample was drawn. The researcher should clearly explain the boundaries of the study’s claims and avoid extending conclusions beyond what the data support.

Limitations of the Study

After the data was collected, what limitations emerged that need to be presented that may have an impact on the generalizability of this study?

Conclusions

As a result of this study, what are the final conclusions made by the researcher about the findings, results, or impacts this study has on practice and future research?

Scholarly Argument. *The conclusions should present a well-considered and justifiable argument that is firmly grounded in the data. The discussion must be conveyed in a professional and scholarly tone, avoiding overgeneralization and maintaining objectivity in interpretation.*

Style and Format Requirements.

Style and Format. The dissertation must conform to the most recent edition of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA).

Students are responsible for ensuring that their dissertation adheres to APA guidelines and the formatting requirements of the university.