Department of Educational Psychology

Guidelines for a Multiple Paper Thesis

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Introduction
The multi-paper dissertation option allows students to write two or more related papers (the typical number is three) in a given topic or area of interest in which they have conducted research as required for the PhD program. While each paper is a stand-alone piece of scholarly work, the independent pieces, taken together, form a cohesive exploration of the specific topic area under study. The introduction and conclusion sections of the dissertation describe how each of the papers fit together.

Guiding Principles
The multi-paper dissertation is an alternative to the traditional format for those students who would find it a benefit. The multi-paper option is based on the same fundamental principles of student independent work and scholarly rigor. The student’s committee has the major responsibility for maintaining the rigor of the dissertation and for negotiating issues as they arise. They are to determine the content and quality of each of the papers and the dissertation as a whole.

Proposal
The multi-paper dissertation should result from a proposal for new research/scholarship, centered on a single research theme, formulated with the help of a committee, and approved at the prospectus meeting. It is at the committee’s discretion whether previously published work by the student can be included in the thesis.

Dissertation
The dissertation should be comprised of two or more manuscripts. The papers should form a cohesive body of work that supports a theme that is expressed clearly in the introduction of the dissertation. Typically, the multi-paper dissertation will include:

- An *abstract* that synthesizes the thesis as a whole
- An *introduction* that binds the various manuscripts together and describes, for the reader, their ‘collective meaning’ and ‘combined contribution’ to the field.
- *Each manuscript* is a stand-alone piece of scholarly work.
- A *conclusion* that briefly summarizes the dissertation’s major findings, limitations, discussion, and recommendations. It also presents and discusses linkages (i.e., similarities and differences) between the separate manuscripts that are included in the dissertation, striving as much as possible to present the document as representative of a coherent body of work. The conclusion chapter wraps everything
together and helps the reader see how the various manuscripts, taken together, make a contribution to the knowledge base regarding the problem.

Co-Authorship
Co-Authorship of papers in a dissertation raises several serious issues that must be addressed by the dissertation committee in a manner that both protects the student’s intellectual contribution and also ensures that the student is conducting their own work. Students must be the first author on all papers, and the contribution of each co-author will need to be specified. As first authors, students are responsible for developing and articulating a concept or idea for research, developing a proposal to pursue this idea, developing a research design, conducting research and analysis, writing major portions of a manuscript, designing an intervention or assessment (if relevant), and interpreting results.

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