

## Rush University Division of Nursing Dissertation Guidelines

The dissertation will be prepared using a three-manuscript format, with each manuscript presenting different aspects of the candidate's scholarly work. The manuscripts will be supplemented with introductory, theoretical, methodological, and discussion/conclusions materials as necessary to create a cohesive body of work that supports the research question. The candidate must be the first author on a minimum of three manuscripts; the first two must be submitted to a peer-reviewed journal prior to the dissertation defense. One manuscript must report the findings of the Advanced Clinical Research Practicum (ACRP) project and one manuscript must report the findings of the dissertation research. To allow students to incorporate committee members' feedback, the manuscript that reports the dissertation findings can be submitted to a journal after the defense.

Students are advised to identify their dissertation committee members in advance of the ACRP defense. Acceptance of the manuscripts for publication is not a requirement for the dissertation defense. Students are also advised to carefully consider journal selection prior to submitting their manuscripts for publication. Should a manuscript be published, the student must be able to obtain permission to include copy written material in the dissertation.

The final dissertation will conform to the specifications outlined in the "Rush University Guide for Preparation of Dissertations and Master's Theses" (available at <http://www.lib.rush.edu/library/pdf/rushdisguide907.pdf>). The main body of the dissertation will consist of five sections:

1. Introduction – The introduction should include a clear statement of the study's purpose and hypotheses to be tested, or research questions for a qualitative study. It provides background information to justify the study. This section will also include statements about the relationships among the dissertation manuscripts.
2. Manuscript #1
3. Manuscript #2
4. Manuscript #3
5. Discussion – The discussion will summarize and synthesize the findings of the three manuscripts into a synopsis that relates the work to the extant literature, advances clinical and research implications, and discusses the study's strengths and limitations.

Each section will contain a reference list of articles cited in that section. Sections 1 and 5 will be written in APA format. Sections 2 through 4 will be written in the format of the journal in which they were published or will be submitted.

## **Dissertation Committee**

A student, in collaboration with his/her advisor, will form a dissertation committee for the purpose of overseeing and approving the student's dissertation. The committee is charged with ensuring the quality and originality of the work.

(a) Dissertation Committee Composition

The dissertation committee will be composed of at least five members: three committee members, one advisor/mentor and one chair. At least two members must be from the College of Nursing and have a Graduate College appointment (CON), while at least one member must be from outside the CON and/or university. Once formed, the committee will choose a dissertation committee chairperson. The chairperson cannot be the student's advisor and must be a Member of the Graduate College. The division director must approve the composition of the committee. The division director may attend all committee meetings, but is considered *ex officio* unless officially chosen as a committee member.

The advisor/mentor will be responsible for directing the project, including ensuring scientific rigor and adherence to ethical standards. The advisor/mentor receives work-load allocation for this responsibility while the student is enrolled in dissertation hours. Advisors/mentors indicate their role as advisor/mentor on their CV. The advisor/mentor will have completed at least one funded, peer-reviewed, published study (as PI, Co-PI or Co-I) beyond the dissertation and have served on at least one Dissertation Committee.

Chairpersons identify their role on the Dissertation Committee as a committee member. The chair will be responsible for administrative activities including:

- (1) scheduling and setting the agenda for committee meetings
- (2) distributing minutes from these meetings to all members of the committee, the student and the student's division director.

b) Dissertation Committee Responsibilities and Timeline

(1) The student's advisor will ensure that the student is in good academic standing and has satisfactorily completed the ACRP requirements prior to the inaugural meeting of the committee. The student's advisor will meet with the student to determine if the dissertation plan is sufficiently developed to hold a meeting. This proposal will be in the form of the 15-page document described above. At the first meeting:

1. The student's advisor will call for nominations for committee chairperson
2. Once elected, the chairperson will direct the remainder of the meeting, and all subsequent meetings
3. The student will present his/her dissertation proposal orally (this presentation should be accompanied by a written proposal that includes the 15-page plan outlined above (i.e., Problem Statement/Specific Aims, Background and Significance, Preliminary Data, and a comprehensive Research Plan).
4. During the presentation, the committee will comment on the goals of the project and its feasibility. Particular attention should be placed on ensuring that the student's work will qualify as a dissertation regardless of its outcome (provided all work is carried out as planned).
5. The committee will decide to accept or call for modifications to the proposal. Should the committee decide that substantial revisions are needed; the committee may opt to hold a second meeting.
6. A unanimous is required to accept the proposal as presented. An affirmative vote creates a contract between the student and the committee that if carried out, will qualify the student for graduation. This assumes that the work will lead to the eventual submission of at least one first-authored manuscript (acceptance of said manuscript is not a college requirement).

(2) The student must keep the committee apprised of the dissertation progress and seek unanimous approval for all changes as the plan progresses. Prior to the student's public defense of his/her dissertation, the committee will again meet to verify that the student's project has been completely carried out as planned. At that meeting, it is assumed that a complete working draft of the dissertation has been distributed and read by all members of the committee. It is further assumed that this draft will follow a structure approved by the university's head librarian. Approval to proceed to the public defense requires a four-fifths approval (only one dissenting vote is allowed).

(c) Changes in Dissertation Committee Composition

If a committee member decides s/he can no longer serve on the dissertation committee, s/he must inform the committee chairperson and a new member must be added. The revised committee must meet the rules for committee composition (i.e., two members from the student's division, graduate college membership, and outside division representation). The committee chairperson will inform the division director of the change.

(d) Public Defense of the Dissertation

(1) Following approval to proceed to public defense, the committee chairperson will inform the division director of the intent to defend. The student and dissertation committee will identify the date for the defense. This date must be at least 15 days prior to the beginning of the subsequent quarter in order for the student to officially graduate within that quarter unless extenuating circumstances are presented to and approved by the Dean.

(2) The student's division will publicly advertise the dissertation defense at least one week prior to the scheduled date. The Dean shall be notified. The defense will be open to the public and will be chaired by the committee chairperson. The student will present his/her dissertation orally. At the conclusion of the oral presentation, the student will be required to field questions from the audience.

(e) Dissertation Approval

Following public defense, the dissertation committee will meet in executive session. All members of the committee must be present at this meeting (physically or electronically). At this meeting, the committee may opt to ask additional questions pertaining to the student's chosen field and/or ask for further clarifications on the student's data. The committee may call for additional editing of the written dissertation at this time. The committee chairperson will then call for a vote to approve. Dissertation approval allows for only one dissenting vote, which cannot be the student's primary advisor. Once the decision to approve has been made, the committee chairperson will inform the student's division director who will then notify the Dean. If editing to the dissertation document is required, the student must make those changes within 30 days so that the document can be signed by all voting members within that time and approved by the University's head librarian. Once approved by the librarian, s/he will inform the Dean's office, division director, registrar, and student that the dissertation document is complete.

Dissertation members sign the Approval of Dissertation Form, forward to the Division Director, and the written document is placed in the student's file.

**Additional Guidelines for the Division of Nursing**

- Rush College of Nursing does not assume responsibility for any travel-related expenses incurred by external committee members.
- The advisor and chair of the Dissertation Committee will have completed at least one funded, peer-reviewed, published study (as PI, Co-PI or Co-I) beyond the dissertation and have served on at least one Dissertation Committee. The committee members should be selected on the basis of content, methodological, and/or clinical expertise.
- The committee should be formed at least one quarter prior to that in which the proposal will be defended.