

**SECTION 3**

**Dissertation Prospectus  
(formerly called the Qualifying Paper)**

The Dissertation Prospectus is a required component of the doctoral degree program course of study. There are two components: A Dissertation Prospectus consisting of a comprehensive review of the literature on a topic, and an oral examination. The Dissertation Prospectus is a substantial review of *approximately 50-60 pages* (excluding front and back matter) focusing on a **critical analysis of the literature on a topic (also known as a research review, a review article, or literature review)**. The review is both descriptive and evaluative of an area of inquiry of scholarly work done in the past. The review generally identifies some topic, theme, or point to emphasize that evolved as a result of readings. Occasionally a research question is proposed to guide the review. The review is a report of primary or original scholarship of mostly written documents. It is not merely a summary of the literature, but a thoughtful and comprehensive analysis and synthesis that places the topic in the context of work in the field. A good review results in a synthesis of the literature, formulating conclusions and recommendations and thus placing the topic in an updated context of established work in the discipline. The review must follow APA format, i.e. the format of the latest edition of the **Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association**.

With the advice and consent of the Dissertation Advisor, the student must request an oral exam of the Dissertation Prospectus and related issues. The exam is conducted by the student's Dissertation Prospectus Committee, facilitated by the student's Dissertation Advisor. This is a closed hearing. The examining committee may ask the student questions regarding any aspect of the Dissertation Prospectus and related issues. Upon completion of the exam, the committee will determine whether the student has successfully completed the Dissertation Prospectus, or if additional work on the Prospectus is required. The Dissertation Prospectus Advisor will notify the Doctoral Program Director of the decision of the committee. The student may not request an Oral Exam of the Prospectus until they have completed a minimum of 42 credit hours of coursework in the doctoral program plan of study. Successful completion of the Dissertation Prospectus and oral defense are requirements for Candidacy to the Doctoral Degree.

**Description**

The purpose of the Dissertation Prospectus is to determine, in part, student preparation, qualifications and potential to pursue original research in the form of the doctoral dissertation. The dissertation is the undertaking of an independent research effort that is creative, scholarly, and of high quality. Consequently, the Dissertation Prospectus involves not only an evaluation of the student's ability to apply, analyze, and synthesize the knowledge, skills and professional attitudes developed in doctoral program course work, but it is also an evaluation of the student's ability to use these competencies in a creative and scholarly manner. The Dissertation Prospectus allows judgment of the student's ability to think judiciously and critically about the theoretical, empirical, and practical aspects of a topic related to educational leadership. There are additional

competencies that contribute to the faculty's determination that the student is appropriately qualified to advance to candidacy as it pertains to the Dissertation Prospectus. These competencies and skills are further described in these guidelines.

The Dissertation Prospectus is equivalent to an examination. The Dissertation Prospectus replaces the former "proctored written comprehensive examination", as one of the requirements to progress to doctoral candidacy. As with many forms of comprehensive examinations, students do not have the choice in deciding who writes questions or the evaluators. While the Dissertation Prospectus topic area may be considered in assignment of Dissertation Prospectus Advisors, the equality of distribution of Dissertation Prospectus committee assignments among the faculty is considered as well. Regardless of who is assigned as Dissertation Prospectus Advisor, each Dissertation Prospectus faculty knows the competencies to be demonstrated, which are applicable to all students, regardless of the topic.

There is a wide range of topics that students are permitted to pursue. More importantly, the competencies demonstrated in a Dissertation Prospectus are the same, regardless of the topic. Students learn about the Dissertation Prospectus and demonstrate competencies in developing a critical analysis of the literature in EDF/EDLD 801 Writing for Research. Students produce a critical analysis of the literature about a topic. This paper frequently leads to the Dissertation Prospectus. Therefore, prior to entering EDF/EDLD 801 course, students should have reviewed significant theoretical and empirical literature about their topic and have a level of expertise or sufficient knowledge base about the topic area. Foundational skills necessary for successful performance in EDF/EDLD 801 include, but are not limited to: writing, knowledge of APA, critical reading, critical thinking, critical writing, critiquing theory and empirical studies, research, statistics, information literacy and computer applications. Following completion of EDF/EDLD 801, students may change their Dissertation Prospectus topic.

### **Prospectus Committee versus Dissertation Committee**

The **Dissertation Prospectus Committee** is not to be confused with a Dissertation Committee. The Dissertation Prospectus Committee consists of a Dissertation Prospectus Advisor, second Dissertation Prospectus committee member, and the Methodologist. The Appointment of a Dissertation Prospectus Committee form must be submitted to the Director of the Doctoral Program prior to work beginning on the paper (Appendix B). Following successful completion of EDF/EDLD 801, the Director is notified of the student's readiness for a Dissertation Prospectus Advisor.

- In the College of Education, the Dissertation Advisor and Dissertation member are appointed by the Director and must be a member of the Graduate Faculty.

## **Approval of Dissertation Prospectus**

The Dissertation Prospectus must be approved by the Dissertation Prospectus Committee. *Appendix D* contains a copy of the “**Approval of Dissertation Prospectus**” form.

## **Requirements and Criteria for Evaluation of the Dissertation Prospectus**

### *I. Description and Overview of the Dissertation Prospectus*

The Dissertation Prospectus committee must approve the topic for the Dissertation Prospectus. The topic may be revised at any time, but must be approved by the committee. Students can only submit their Dissertation Prospectus after successfully completing 42 credits of the Ed.D. curriculum.

A topic is selected that is sufficiently narrow to permit an in-depth investigation, relevant to an area of advanced study/educational leadership that guides a range of inquiry, results in an extensive search of scholarly literature, and generation of questions for further inquiry. The topic may be related to the intended topic of the student’s dissertation.

The Dissertation Prospectus is a substantial review of approximately 50-60 pages (excluding front and back matter) focusing on a **critical analysis of the literature on a topic (also known as a research review, a review article, or literature review)**. The review is both descriptive and evaluative of an area of inquiry of scholarly work done in the past. The review generally identifies some topic, theme, or point to emphasize that evolved as a result of readings. Occasionally a research question is proposed to guide the review. The review is a report of primary or original scholarship of mostly written documents. It is not merely a summary of the literature, but a thoughtful and comprehensive analysis and synthesis that places the topic in the context of work in the field. A good review results in a synthesis of the literature, formulating conclusions and recommendations and thus placing the topic in an updated context of established work in the discipline.

Students that are successful in completing the Dissertation Prospectus demonstrate several competencies and skills that contribute to the graduate faculty’s determination the student is appropriately qualified to pursue original research in the form of the doctoral dissertation. These competencies and skills include:

#### **1. Critical Thinking and Scholarly Inquiry**

- a. Search, read, interpret, analyze, critique (appraise), integrate and synthesize research literature pertaining to selected topic
- b. Generate implications for future research, theory and practice through analysis of empirical, theoretical, critical/analytic, and methodological literature
- c. Facilitate the application of theory to practice
- d. Use and contribute to a variety of knowledge bases developed to deal with contemporary, as well as future problems and issues
- e. Cultivate a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of educational change to be able to distinguish its causes, effects, magnitude and cultural significance.

2. **Mature, Professional, and Effective Writing Style**
  - a. Write a scholarly paper at a level commensurate with advanced graduate study
  - b. Use APA Editorial Style
  - c. Develop an effective writing style that is at a level commensurate with advanced graduate study: organized, understandable, smooth, cohesive, explicit, concise, and grammatically correct (language use and sentence structure); avoids bias in language; and is in APA manuscript style
3. **Accountability and Responsibility**
  - a. Understand ethical responsibilities of providing accurate information and communicating effectively.
4. **Technology, Computer Applications, and Information Literacy in Scholarly Inquiry**
  - a. Use technology in scholarly inquiry mastering information literacy skills (information seeking and retrieval methods) and computer applications to document information logically, efficiently, and ethically

## *II. Organization of the Dissertation Prospectus*

*The quality of the presentation demonstrates critical thinking and scholarly inquiry.*  
Follow guidelines for developing a critical review of the literature distributed in EDF/EDLD 801.

Pages preceding the Introduction include:

- Title page** (example follows in *Appendix C*)
- Approval of Dissertation Prospectus Page** (*Appendix D*)
- Table of Contents**

Six Sections of the Dissertation Prospectus include: Introduction, Review of Literature, Discussion, References, Bibliography, and Appendix

### **1. Introduction**

*Organized with the following subtitles:*

- Topic Overview**
- Organization of the Literature Review**
- Purpose of the Study**
- Scope of the Study**
- Significance of the Study**
- Tentative Research Question(s)**

### **2. Review of the Literature**

*Organized*

- a. **Introduction - need an introduction to guide the reader for the direction of the literature review**

**b. Considerations in writing the Review of the Literature**

1. Organized in a logical, meaningful, and orderly manner with appropriate level subheadings to connect main ideas, pertinent themes and topics
2. Elicits competence in reading, summarizing, interpreting, analyzing, critiquing and integrating research literature pertaining to selected topic that is substantially significant and more than superficial investigation.
3. A good review of the literature is more than simply a summary of the research. It is both a *critical* evaluation of the existing research and a *synthesis* of that work. The literature is synthesized in some logical manner. Opposing views, contradictory findings, and gaps in the literature (what questions are being suggested) are presented, bringing clarity to the issues.
4. Areas of agreement and disagreement are reported.
5. Minor studies that have similar results, methodologies, strengths and/or weaknesses are grouped together.
6. Major studies or seminal writings are discussed in detail.
7. Organizes, integrates and synthesizes the literature on the topic.
8. Contains few "anecdotes" or "opinion articles and "critically appraises" past empirical studies and other theoretical, methodological, and analytic/critical areas of inquiry. Review conveys to the reader what knowledge and ideas have been established on a topic.
9. "Weaknesses" in existing studies are discussed & important "gaps" in the literature presented.
10. Clarity, integrates and synthesizes related facts and content of primary reports into a comprehensive view. New knowledge is created from existing theory & research findings on topic
11. Thorough, pertinent to the research topic, problem or question, based on recent studies,
12. Mostly primary sources, and few "secondary sources" all which are adequately paraphrased (with few strings of quotations)
13. At least 50 references from a variety of sources. Scholarly peer-reviewed journals including empirical studies, theoretical articles, research reviews, and methodological studies are the primary sources used in the review literature.
14. Distinguishes between an author's theorizing or suggesting versus author's research findings.
15. Body of the review is objective and avoids: vague generalities, bias, opinions, conclusions, or recommendations.
16. Check consistency of periods, commas and other punctuation.

**c. Summary - A brief summary, interpretation and evaluation of others' findings, theories, opinions and conclusions (1-2 page maximum)**

### **3. References**

- a. All references cited in the review must be included in this section. Complete bibliographic information must be provided for each source, according to APA (6<sup>th</sup> Ed.).
- b. All references must be cited in the review of the literature.
- c. Includes at least 50 references.
- d. Reference and/or bibliography list *should* include the following types and forms of literature relevant to the topic:
  - i. One non-periodical (Book representing theoretical literature), one non-periodical (chapter in a book), at least 15 empirical studies (at least three that are quantitative in nature and three qualitative studies), one theoretical article, one critical analysis review; one methodological study, one journal abstract, one Dissertation Abstract, and one Government document.
  - ii. At least one periodical must be a hard copy and at least one periodical must be electronic.

### **5. Bibliography (section is not required)**

This includes all literature reviewed, but not cited in the paper. Complete bibliographic information must be provided for each source, according to APA (6<sup>th</sup> Ed.).

### **6. Appendix (Follow APA for Appendixes)**

Include “relevant” supplemental material (Optional)

## Appendix B

### Appointment of Dissertation Prospectus Committee

**APPOINTMENT OF DISSERTATION PROSPECTUS COMMITTEE**

The composition of the Dissertation Prospectus Committee is not final until all signatures, including the Director of Doctoral Program, are obtained.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Candidate Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Candidate (Student) ID

The faculty members listed below have agreed to serve on this Dissertation Prospectus Committee.

	Typed Name	Signature:
Chair:	_____	_____
Member:	_____	_____
Methodologist	_____	_____

The Director of Doctoral Program has reviewed these appointments. They are in compliance with current University regulations and are hereby approved.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_

CC: Doctoral Candidate

Appendix C

Dissertation Prospectus Title Page

<Title of Paper>

DISSERTATION PROSPECTUS

By

<Student Name>

Submitted to the Faculty of  
the Consortium of Southeastern Louisiana University  
and the University of Louisiana at Lafayette  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Doctor of Education  
in Educational Leadership

Southeastern Louisiana University  
Hammond, Louisiana

<month year>

Appendix D

Approval of Dissertation Prospectus

**APPROVAL OF DISSERTATION PROSPECTUS**

**<Title of Paper>**

**By**

**<Student Name>**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Faculty Name and initials of highest degree(s)  
Dissertation Prospectus Committee Advisor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Faculty Name and initials of highest degree(s)  
Dissertation Prospectus Committee Member

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Faculty Name and initials of highest degree(s)  
Dissertation Prospectus Committee Methodologist

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

cc: Director of Doctoral Program  
Doctoral Candidate