

Guidelines for Preparation of the Doctoral Dissertation

UTHealth Houston Cizik School of Nursing PhD in Nursing Program

July 2026

Contents

	Page
OVERVIEW OF THE DISSERTATION PROCESS	2
Guidelines for Dissertation Research Project.....	3
Dissertation Chair and Committee	4
Committee Members.....	5
Changes in Committee Membership	6
Approval of Dissertation Topic and Committee	7
DISSERTATION PROPOSAL.....	8
Content of Dissertation Proposal	8
Procedures for Oral Defense and Institutional Review.....	14
Oral Defense	14
Institutional Review(s)	17
DISSERTATION	18
Content of Dissertation	19
Dissertation Procedures and Oral Defense.....	22
Instructions for Preparing the Dissertation	25
Format... ..	25
Typing	26
Illustrations... ..	26

References.....	27
Submission	27
REFERENCES.....	28
APPENDICES	
A. Approval Forms.....	29
Approval Form D-1.....	30
Approval Form D-2.....	32
Approval Form D-3.....	33
B. Sample Title Page	34
C. Sample Table of Contents	36
D. Evaluation of the PhD Dissertation Defense	38

Introduction to the Manual

The manual is intended to provide the student with guidelines for completing the dissertation research project. The appendices to the manual also contain examples of approval forms, biosketch, title page, the table of contents, and evaluation forms.

The student is encouraged to read the entire manual, including the appendices, before beginning the process of dissertation work and to obtain necessary clarification from faculty. The student is responsible for the timely and appropriate use of forms necessary to complete dissertation requirements. The forms are included in the appended materials of this manual. A calendar of deadlines, available from the Registrar's Office, lists graduation requirements and deadline dates. Final dates for submitting papers and manuscripts cannot be waived. Each degree candidate, not the faculty advisor, is responsible for meeting UTHHealth requirements and deadlines.

Overview of the Dissertation Process

The dissertation is recognized within academic and scientific communities as the candidate's initial research effort in a substantive area, and it is viewed as a mentored process. Working closely with the dissertation committee chair (chair), members, and others, the candidate conducts research that makes a substantial contribution to the body of knowledge in nursing. Because of the complexity and interdisciplinary nature of healthcare problems, the candidate works with scientists from nursing and other disciplines, but takes principal responsibility for the design, conduct, analyses/evaluation, interpretation, and dissemination of the dissertation research under the supervision of the dissertation committee chair and committee members.

The dissertation process begins after the student advances to candidacy for the PhD in nursing. The dissertation process consists of the following five stages: (a) approval of the dissertation topic and committee membership, (b) defense of the research proposal, (c) institutional review/s for the protection of human subjects and/or animals, (d) conduct of the study, and (e) defense and dissemination of the dissertation project. Each stage is discussed in later sections of this manual. Defense of the dissertation project for proposal approval and final project approval requires both oral and written presentations.

As an academic requirement for the PhD in nursing, the dissertation is expected to reflect high standards of research, scholarship, and scientific writing. The style, format, and substantive content of the dissertation must meet the standards of the Cizik School of Nursing and the dissertation committee. The student is responsible for ensuring that the dissertation is clearly written, grammatically correct, and free of

typographical errors. Dissemination of the dissertation findings is essential for contributing to nursing science. The final dissertation product must include three manuscripts that have been submitted or are ready for submission to a peer-reviewed journal. One of these manuscripts must include findings from the dissertation; note that this manuscript may not be submitted prior to dissertation committee approval at the final obligatory defense. The other two manuscripts should reflect work relevant to the student's research area and be submitted. The student must be the first author on all three manuscripts.

Guidelines for the Dissertation Research Project

- The student should refer to appendices in this manual for approval forms and sample documents relevant to the dissertation.
- The student may enroll in dissertation credits after successful completion of the Candidacy exam and following PhD Council approval of Form D-1.
- The student must be enrolled for dissertation credits to hold meetings with the chair and committee members and to participate in the proposal and final defenses of the dissertation work.
- A minimum of 12 dissertation credits is required for graduation. The student must be enrolled for at least 3 credits every semester, including the semester of graduation.
- The student negotiates the scope of the research with the dissertation chair. The approach must be justified based on what is known across disciplines about the topic. The goal of the dissertation project is to make an original contribution to nursing science.
- The dissertation undergoes a two-level approval process. The PhD Council

approves both the topic of the dissertation and the membership of the dissertation committee. The dissertation committee approves the research proposal and the final dissertation product.

The final dissertation product must include three manuscripts that have been submitted or are ready for submission to a peer-reviewed journal. One of these publications must be data-based and report the results of the student's dissertation research; note that this manuscript may not be submitted for publication prior to dissertation committee approval at the final obligatory defense. The second and third manuscripts may be data-based or focused on a related scholarly topic, such as an integrative literature review; conceptual analysis or theoretical development process; methodological issue; instrument development process; or clinical application of the research findings to practice.

The student must be the first author on all three manuscripts. Students may submit the dissertation project manuscripts in a format other than APA, if the manuscript was published in or submitted to a journal that requires a different formatting/referencing style. Before the dissertation topic and committee members are approved by the PhD Council, the student negotiates with the academic advisor regarding the focus and content of the manuscript(s) and the peer-reviewed journal(s) to which the manuscript(s) will be submitted. After approval of the dissertation committee, the negotiation is with the entire dissertation committee and before the final defense date. Dissertation committee members who made contributions to the manuscript(s) should be included as co-authors. The academic advisor or dissertation committee, as appropriate, approves each manuscript prior to submission.

Dissertation Chair and Committee

To qualify as dissertation chair, the individual must be a full-time, doctorally-prepared, research-focused member of the faculty at Cizik School of Nursing and be approved by the PhD Council. A list of faculty who meet the requirements is available on the PhD webpage on the Cizik School of Nursing website. The chair is not only the major professor who guides the student through the dissertation process, but also one who has expertise in the substantive area of the student's research problem. The role of the chair includes:

- Assisting the student in selecting committee members and resources.
- Assisting the student in formalizing researchable hypotheses, or research questions, and methods.
- Critiquing the student's drafts for clarity, logic, and substance, suggesting revisions as appropriate within 15 working days of submission; suggestions of the academic advisor or dissertation chair, as appropriate, may be communicated verbally or in writing.
- Approving cognates before, during, and/or after the dissertation proposal defense.
- Assisting the student in formal preparation of the proposal, Institutional Review Board (IRB) and agency forms, final report, and manuscript(s).
- Deciding if the IRB and agency forms are ready for submission.
- Chairing the student's dissertation proposal and final defense meeting.
- Deciding with the other committee members if the proposal and final report meet quality standards that merit approval and submission.

Committee Members

Together with the chair, the student identifies and recruits members for the dissertation committee. A minimum of 3 members, including the chair, is required, with a maximum of 5 members possible. The committee must include at least two doctorally-prepared, research-focused members of the faculty at Cizik School of Nursing; at least one must hold a nursing degree. The committee must include at least one doctorally-prepared committee member who is external to Cizik School of Nursing. At least one committee member must hold a doctorate in a discipline outside of nursing. Members may be selected to provide expertise in methods, the target study population, the theoretical base for the project, an interdisciplinary perspective, and/or other areas that enhance the quality of scholarship. The role of the committee member includes:

- Assisting the student in formalizing researchable hypotheses, or research questions, and methods.
- Critiquing student drafts of the proposal and the final dissertation product forwarded by the chair and suggesting revisions as appropriate. Each committee member will be given a maximum of 15 working days to communicate their critiques and comments to the chair and student.
- Suggesting cognates before the dissertation proposal defense.
- Participating in the student's dissertation proposal and final defense meetings.
- Deciding with the chair if the proposal and final report meet quality standards that merit approval and submission.

Changes in Committee Membership

On occasion, a committee member may leave the university, or a conflict may arise among committee members. In the case of major disagreement, committee

members will make every effort to resolve their differences. If a change in the chair or in the dissertation committee membership becomes necessary, the student is required to obtain proper approval, as outlined below. In addition, any work that the student completed before the change may be subject to revision (See D7400 Dissertation Policy).

If a change to the dissertation committee is necessary, the student must consult with their dissertation chair. The dissertation chair will submit a revised Form D-1 (see Appendix A) with the rationale for the change to the chair of the PhD Council for approval. Upon approval of the change by the PhD Council, the student files the revised Form D-1 with the PhD Program Director.

If the dissertation chair needs to be changed, a written request signed by the student is sent to the PhD Program Director. The PhD Program Director sends the written request to the current chair for signature and then sends the written request to the chair of the PhD Council for approval. This written request explains the rationale for changing the chair and includes the name and qualifications of the faculty member being recommended as the new chair. A revised Form D-1 is attached to the written request. Upon approval of the change by the PhD Council, the student files the revised Form D-1 with the PhD Program Director.

Approval of Dissertation Topic and Committee

PhD Council approval of the dissertation topic and committee membership is required before the student may proceed with development of the dissertation proposal. The purpose of this first-level approval is to ensure that the resources that are necessary to support the student are also appropriate for the nature and scope of the

research.

The student submits a completed Form D-1 to the chair of the PhD Council. On the form, the student lists the working title of the dissertation and the proposed members of the dissertation committee. The title may not exceed two lines and conveys the substantive area of study, the target population, and the general methodological approach. In addition, the student attaches a curriculum vitae or a Biosketch using the current NIH-provided template for each proposed committee member who is outside Cizik School of Nursing.

Upon approval of the proposed topic and committee membership by the PhD Council, the student files the final Form D-1 with the PhD Program Director and distributes a copy to each member of the dissertation committee. The student then proceeds with development of the dissertation proposal.

Change of Dissertation Topic

If a change to the dissertation topic is necessary, the student must consult with their dissertation chair. The dissertation chair will submit a revised Form D-1 (see Appendix A) with the rationale for the change to the chair of the PhD Council for approval. Upon approval of the change by the PhD Council, the student files the revised Form D-1 with the PhD Program Director.

Dissertation Proposal

Students are required to use APA format for the dissertation proposal and advised to use a software referencing program. Student pricing is available on the websites of reference software.

Content of Dissertation Proposal

The dissertation proposal comprises two main sections: 1) Introduction (Specific Aims, Background and Significance, Innovation, Preliminary Studies) and 2) Research Approach. The contents of the sections are detailed below

Title Page

The dissertation Title page should contain the dissertation title, submission information, student name, month and year. The format can be found in Appendix C.

Introduction

Table of Contents.

The Table of Contents should outline the elements of the dissertation. An example of a Table of Contents can be found in Appendix D.

Specific Aims

This section concisely introduces the reader to the problem of interest and sets the context for the substance of the proposed research, followed by the specific aims of the dissertation research. The hypotheses, or research questions, to be addressed are listed.

Background and Significance

This section of the proposal provides a critical evaluation and synthesis of the literature leading to the proposed research. Include the following:

1. A literature review reflecting the current state of the science from multidisciplinary sources.
2. Clearly, logically, and concisely articulated gaps in knowledge that the dissertation will address. This section should explain the importance of the problem, how the proposed project will improve knowledge and describe how the concepts being

proposed will drive the field if the aims are achieved.

3. A description of the importance of the proposed research to health and nursing by relating the specific aims to the broad, long-term objectives.
4. A description of the theoretical and/or conceptual framework guiding the research.

Innovation and Contribution to the Field

This section should articulate how the proposed research advances, challenges, or redefines existing knowledge. Clearly describe what makes the approach innovative, whether through new theoretical frameworks, novel methodologies, original interventions, or the development or application of new instruments or technologies. Explain how the work offers a meaningful shift from current research and why that shift matters to nursing science and practice.

Preliminary Studies

This section provides an account of preliminary work done by the student during the PhD program that is related to the proposed research. Examples of previous work include the student's literature review paper, pre-testing of instruments, pilot studies, and clinical observations if those are consistent with the dissertation research topic. A dissertation using secondary data can include preliminary work that pertains to methods for secondary data analyses or other relevant topics. The purposes of the Preliminary Studies section are to demonstrate (a) cumulative study in the substantive area of the proposal, (b) the feasibility of the project, and (c) the student's competence to conduct the research.

Research Approach

This section describes the overall strategy for the study. The elements include

the following: research design, setting, population, sample, sampling procedures, instruments, intervention(s) as appropriate, procedures for data collection, procedures for data analysis, how the data will be interpreted, study limitations, potential problems with the proposed procedures, alternative approaches to achieve the specific aims, and human subject considerations.

1. Research Design and Setting: Briefly identify the study design and setting.
2. Population, Sample, and Sampling Procedures: Identify the sample composition, explain how the sample will be obtained, and provide justification for the sample size. The sample is described in detail enough for the reader to determine the feasibility of obtaining a suitable sample size to test the hypotheses, if applicable.
3. Variables and Instruments: Provide conceptual definitions and operational definitions of the variables. Detail and define each instrument used to measure the variables, with reliability and validity information if appropriate to the study design. Evidence of the psychometric or biometric properties of the proposed instrument(s) is presented, with plans for further testing in the dissertation as appropriate.
4. Data Collection Procedures and Intervention(s): For studies testing an intervention, include the measurement points and application of the intervention(s); for descriptive studies describe the measurement points; for qualitative studies describe data collection procedures; for secondary data analyses, describe data sources and access, data pre-processing, and the merging of multiple datasets or multiple data points as appropriate.
5. Data Analysis: Restate each hypothesis or specific aim. Detail the analysis procedures to address each hypothesis or aim and how the data will be interpreted.

Data analysis procedures must be justified and should specifically address the testing of each specific aim and hypothesis or research question.

6. Study Limitations: Acknowledge potential problems and limitations of the proposed procedures and identify alternative approaches to achieve the specific aims.
7. Human Subjects: Include a paragraph on the protection of research participants that details approvals that will be sought, consent that will be obtained, potential risks to research participants, and procedures proposed to reduce the risks. Describe the composition of the proposed study population.

Human Participants.

The student is responsible for adhering to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services regulations for the protection of human participants (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2023). The following 3 points are enumerated and succinctly addressed:

- A description of the proposed involvement of human participants in the research is provided. The number, age range, and health status of the study population(s) and criteria for inclusion and/or exclusion in the research are described. In addition, the involvement of vulnerable participants, such as fetuses, pregnant women, children, or institutionalized individuals, is justified.
- Potential risks to the participants from study participation are identified, and for each potential risk, a justified assessment of the likelihood of occurrence and seriousness of risk is provided. All potential risks (physical, psychological, social, legal, or other) are included.
- The procedures that will be used to minimize the aforementioned potential risks,

including the risk for loss of confidentiality, are described.

Vertebrate Animals.

The student is responsible for adhering to the U.S. Public Health Service Policy on Humane Care and Use of Laboratory Animals for the Protection of Animal Subjects.

The following 5 points are enumerated and succinctly addressed:

- A description of the proposed involvement of animal subjects in the research is provided. The species, strains, age, sex, and number of animals to be used and criteria for inclusion and/or exclusion in the research are described.
- The use of animals, the choice of species, and the numbers proposed for use are justified.
- The veterinary care that the subjects will receive is discussed.
- Potential risks from study participation are described, and for each potential risk, a justified assessment of the likelihood of occurrence and seriousness of risk is provided. As appropriate, the method of euthanasia to be used is described and justified.
- The procedures that will be used to minimize the aforementioned potential risks are described, including the use of analgesics, anesthetics, tranquilizers, and restraining devices to minimize discomfort, distress, pain, and injury.

References

Include all references for the Introduction and Research Approach sections.

Appendices

The appendices should include the following materials:

- Approval Forms D-1, D-2, and D-3.

- Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects (CPHS) or Animal Welfare Committee (AWC) approval letters, or approval letters from clinical agencies as required.
- Data collection instruments, (e.g., survey, interview guides, software descriptions), open-source computer programming code and data models (if applicable), and clinical protocols.
- Glossy photographs or color images of biological or histological data.
- Participant consent form(s).

Procedures for Oral Defense and Institutional Review of Dissertation Proposal

Proposal Oral Defense

Oral defense of the dissertation proposal is mandatory. The purpose of this meeting is to ensure that the candidate has a well-developed dissertation plan and the necessary resources to successfully conduct and disseminate the dissertation research.

When the student has prepared a proposal that is acceptable to the dissertation chair, the student sends copies of the proposal for distribution by the chair to the committee members. When all committee members agree that the student is ready to defend the proposed research, the student arranges an oral defense. Two weeks prior to the selected date and time for the oral defense, the student provides notice of the date, time, place, and title of the defense to the PhD Program Director, and the student obtains Form D-2 (see Appendix A). Although the standard duration of the oral defense is approximately 2 hours, the actual time allocated should be long enough to ensure an adequate oral presentation and committee comment.

Dissertation Chair and Committee Responsibilities – Oral Proposal Defense

The dissertation chair should follow these guidelines at the student's defense:

1. Welcome the committee members and the student.
2. Introduce the student and the title of his/her dissertation.
3. Introduce each of the members of the committee, including their place of employment and title.
4. Explain the procedure of the defense:
 - a. The student presents his/her research study.
 - b. The committee is then asked if they have any questions.
 - c. After the committee is finished with their questions, the student leaves the room.
Others can stay with the student.
 - d. After the student leaves the room, the committee deliberates. In deliberation, the committee decides on the outcome of the defense. The outcome options are:
 - i. Approval
 - ii. Approval with Reservations
 - iii. Disapproval.
5. If Approval with Reservations is the decision, the chair can be responsible for the changes or the committee can choose to review the changes.
6. If Disapproval is the decision, a committee composed of the chair, the PhD Program Director, and the Assistant Dean for Research will determine the appropriate course of action. If there is a conflict of interest for the PhD Program Director or Assistant Dean for Research or if either is a committee member, the PhD Council will appoint an alternate committee member(s).
7. All members sign the Form D-2. If Approval is the decision, the student is provided

with a copy and the D-2 form is submitted to the PhD Program Director. If not, the form is withheld until all stipulations are completed.

Student Responsibilities - Oral Proposal Defense

At the oral defense, the student presents the proposed research in the order of the sections of the written proposal, inclusive of specific aims through research design, methods, findings, and implications for future research. After the presentation, members of the dissertation committee may ask questions, make recommendations, and offer comments. After the student leaves the room, the committee deliberates and votes on the acceptance of the proposed research for implementation.

Committee Oral Proposal Defense Options

Majority decision of the committee prevails. The committee decision must take one of the following forms:

- a. Approval: If the proposal is followed precisely as detailed, the student's research design will not be challenged later.
- b. Approval with Reservations: Changes may be made under the supervision of the chair without further committee meeting.
- c. Disapproval: A committee composed of the chair, the PhD Program Director, and the Assistant Dean for Research will determine the appropriate course of action. If there is a conflict of interest for the PhD Program Director or Assistant Dean for Research or if either is a committee member, the PhD Council will appoint an alternate committee member(s).

If there is a tie among an even number of committee members, the PhD Program Director serves as the tiebreaker. If there is a conflict of interest for the PhD Program

Director or the Director is a committee member, the Assistant Dean for Research serves as the tiebreaker. If there is a conflict of interest for the Assistant Dean for Research or the Assistant Dean is a committee member, the Associate Dean of Research serves as the tiebreaker.

After the committee makes their decision, the student is invited back into the room, and the chair notifies the student of the committee's decision. The dissertation chair files Form D-2 with the PhD Program Director. If the committee decision is disapproval, a new Form D-2 is generated and filed after the second proposal defense.

Institutional Review(s)

Upon approval of the proposal, the student prepares the appropriate UTHHealth Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects (CPHS)/Institutional Review Board (IRB) forms. The United States Department of Health and Human Services stipulates the necessary elements of an informed consent process. These elements provide the basis for guidelines used by IRBs of academic and clinical institutions within the United States. IRB guidelines for research with human participants or animal subjects are available from the Center for Nursing Research or from the UTHHealth-Houston IRB (Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects [CPHS]) office. To uphold the right of every human being to know about and give consent to any investigational procedure, ethical review by the CPHS is required for dissertation research that involves human participants. Human participation consent forms must be in language that is understandable to the participant. Consent forms should be written at the sixth-to-eighth grade reading level. To assure subject welfare and protection from discomfort, ethical review by the UTHHealth-Houston AWC is required for research that involves

animals.

If the research will involve participants from institutions other than UTHealth-Houston, permission is required from the IRBs of those institutions. The student obtains a copy of clinical agency or other IRB forms from the approval-granting agency. The student is responsible for ensuring that current forms are used.

Only individuals with qualifying faculty appointments at UTHealth Houston are eligible to serve as Principal Investigator on IRB submissions. Students may participate as co-investigators but must do so under the supervision of an eligible faculty PI. All student-conducted research involving human subjects must have a faculty sponsor who is eligible to serve as a Principal Investigator. The faculty sponsor is required to assume the role of PI on the IRB application and is responsible for the oversight and ethical conduct of the student's research activities.

Although the faculty sponsor is commonly the student's dissertation chair, this is not a requirement. The faculty sponsor and the student investigator are jointly responsible for ensuring compliance with all applicable University policies, procedures, and federal regulations governing the conduct of research. The student investigator may complete the IRB application.

Since the UTHealth-Houston CPHS/IRB uses an online application process, a copy of the approved proposal, Form D-2, and all necessary completed IRB forms are to be submitted to the dissertation chair before submission for CPHS/IRB approvals. After the chair signs off on CPHS/IRB forms the student completes all CPHS/IRB or AWC procedures. CPHS/IRB submissions are electronic, and submission is done directly with CPHS. Animal Welfare Committee protocols are submitted online directly to

the AWC. Students are responsible for checking all due dates for submission to either committee.

Dissertation

The dissertation addresses the following areas: (a) what the student did, (b) how the student conducted the research, (c) what was found, and (d) how the research extends the science and practice of nursing. The dissertation represents the culmination of the candidate's doctoral training and, as such, must reflect critical thinking, analysis, synthesis, and scholarly expression of ideas.

The final dissertation product includes the following components: preliminary pages; a summary of the study with reference to appended materials; and the three manuscripts, references, and appendices. The summary section describes any changes to the approved dissertation proposal, a summary of the dissertation findings, and a summary of the manuscripts related to the dissertation research. The summary section is followed by three or more manuscripts related to the dissertation research. The manuscript section is followed by appendices that include the approved dissertation proposal; IRB and agency approvals; consent form(s); instrument(s) used for data collection in accordance with copyright law; complete, detailed study protocol(s); and curriculum vitae.

Contents of Dissertation

1. Title Page: A sample Title page is found in Appendix D of this manual. It includes the title of the dissertation, student name, and date.
2. Form D-3 (see Appendix A): Type all content of the Form D-3 in upper case. Every member of the dissertation committee must sign the Form D-3 electronically. The

Form D-3 is page ii, but the number does not appear on the page.

3. Acknowledgments page (Optional): This page is optional and may be used if the student wishes to express formal recognition and appreciation for extraordinary support that made possible the completion of the research. Grant support for the dissertation is acknowledged on this page. Acknowledging assistance from the dissertation chair and committee members is not necessary. This page, if used, is numbered iii.
4. Abstract: The abstract is the abstract for the entire dissertation and includes the student's name, the title of the dissertation, and the date of graduation. If the title runs to 2 lines, the second line is single-spaced and in inverted pyramid form. The abstract must not exceed 500 words and must not contain tables, figures, graphs, references, or formulas. Symbols and foreign words must be displayed clearly and accurately, with accents and diacritical marks as appropriate. The abstract must conform to the specified margin and paper requirements. Elements that must be addressed include the following: the problem or purpose of the study, the general procedure(s) used, major source(s) of data, major data analysis approach, and conclusion(s). The abstract must be equivalent to the dissertation in meeting the standards for scholarly writing. The abstract is numbered as page iii, or page iv, if an acknowledgment page is included. If an abstract is required for a manuscript included in the dissertation, it follows the form required by the journal and is placed with the manuscript(s).
5. Table of Contents: The table of contents is a list of all elements included in the dissertation, enumerated in sequential order. A sample table of contents page is

found in Appendix D of this manual.

6. Summary of Study Section: The summary section describes any changes to the approved dissertation proposal, a summary of the dissertation findings, and a summary of the manuscripts related to the dissertation research. The final dissertation product must include at least three manuscripts that have been submitted or are ready for submission to a peer-reviewed journal. One of these publications must include findings from the dissertation. The manuscript that includes the findings from the dissertation research may not be submitted for publication until after dissertation committee approval. The other two manuscripts should reflect work relevant to the student's research area and must be submitted for peer review prior to the oral dissertation defense. The student must be first author on all three manuscripts. Students may submit the dissertation project manuscripts in a format other than APA, if the manuscript was published in or submitted to a journal that requires a different formatting/referencing style.
7. Manuscript 1: Include the manuscript that has been submitted or is published.
8. Manuscript 2: Include the manuscript that has been submitted or is published.
9. Manuscript 3: Include the manuscript that is ready for submission.
10. Appendices: The appendices provide additional information to that in the proposal and manuscript(s) so that study replication by others is possible. Institutional approvals, consent forms, instruments used for data collection, and detailed study protocol(s) are placed in the appendices. Data not included in the manuscript are presented in tabular or figure format. The appended materials must not repeat information in the proposal or manuscript. Rather, they serve to supplement the

major components of the dissertation. Appended materials are organized sequentially according to the first mention in the text. Each appendix has a title page that includes the sequential capital letter for the identification and name of the appended material.

Procedures for Oral Defense of Dissertation

Oral Dissertation Defense

Final defense of the dissertation is mandatory. The purpose of this meeting is to ensure that the candidate has satisfactorily implemented the dissertation plan and prepared a scholarly dissemination report of the research.

The dissertation must be approved four weeks before the last class day of the semester. The deadline for oral defense will be published in the calendar of events for each semester. To meet the deadline, the student should work with the dissertation chair to devise a schedule. The schedule should provide enough time after the oral defense for preparation of the dissertation and electronic submission.

When the student has prepared a final dissertation product that is acceptable to the chair, the chair provides the dissertation electronically to the committee members. When all committee members agree that the student is ready to defend the research, the student arranges an oral defense. Two weeks prior to the selected date and time for the oral defense, the student provides notice of the date, time, place, and title of the defense to the PhD Program Director, the student will send an email of their abstract and names of the chair and committee members with their credentials to the PhD Program Director, and the student obtains Form D-3 (see Appendix A). Although the standard duration of the oral defense is approximately 2 hours, the actual time allocated

should be long enough to ensure an adequate oral presentation and committee comment.

Dissertation Chair and Committee Responsibilities – Oral Dissertation Defense

The dissertation chair should follow these guidelines at the student's defense:

1. Welcome the committee members and the student.
2. Introduce the student and the title of his/her dissertation.
3. Introduce each of the members of the committee, including their place of employment and title.
4. Explain the procedure of the defense:
 - a. The student presents his/her research study.
 - b. The committee is then asked if they have any questions.
 - c. After the committee is finished with their questions, the student leaves the room. Others can stay with the student.
 - d. After the student leaves the room, the committee deliberates. In deliberation, the committee decides on the outcome of the defense. The outcome options are:
 - i. Approval
 - ii. Approval with Reservations
 - iii. Disapproval.
5. If Approval with Reservations is the decision, the chair can be responsible for the changes or the committee can choose to review the changes.
6. If Disapproval is the decision, a committee composed of the chair, the PhD Program Director, and the Assistant Dean for Research will determine the appropriate course of action. If there is a conflict of interest for the PhD Program Director or Assistant

Dean for Research or if either is a committee member, the PhD Council will appoint an alternate committee member(s).

7. All members sign the Form D-3. If Approval is the decision, the student is provided with a copy and the D-3 form is submitted to the PhD Program Director. If not, the form is withheld until all stipulations are completed.

Student Responsibilities - Oral Dissertation Defense

At the oral defense, the student presents the research in the order of the sections of the dissertation, inclusive of specific aims through recommendations for further research. Most of the presentation time is focused on the findings and interpretation, discussion, conclusions, and implications for practice and the profession. After the presentation, members of the dissertation committee first, followed by guests, may ask questions to the doctoral candidate, make recommendations, and offer comments. After all questions and discussion end, guests are asked to leave the room. The student is then further questioned by the committee and then asked to leave the room. After the student leaves the room, the committee deliberates and votes on the acceptance of the dissertation.

Committee Oral Dissertation Defense Options

Majority decision of the committee prevails. The committee decision must take one of the following forms:

- a. Approval: The committee recommends that the student be approved for the degree of PhD in nursing and completes Form D-3 and PhD Dissertation Evaluation Form (See Appendix E).
- b. Approval with Reservations: Suggested changes are to be made under the

supervision of the chair without further committee meeting. After receiving notice from the chair that the changes have been made, the committee will then recommend that the student be approved for the degree of PhD in nursing and complete Form D-3 and PhD Dissertation Evaluation Form.

- c. Disapproval: A committee composed of the chair, the PhD Program Director, and the Assistant Dean for Research will determine the appropriate course of action. If there is a conflict of interest for the PhD Program Director or Assistant Dean for Research or if either is a committee member, the PhD Council will appoint an alternate committee member(s).

If there is a tie among an even number of committee members, the PhD Program Director serves as the tiebreaker. If there is a conflict of interest for the PhD Program Director or the Director is a committee member, the Assistant Dean for Research serves as the tiebreaker. If there is a conflict of interest for the Assistant Dean for Research or the Assistant Dean is a committee member, the Associate Dean of Research serves as the tiebreaker.

After the committee makes their decision, the student is invited back into the room, and the chair notifies the student of the committee's decision. If the decision is Approval, the dissertation chair files Form D-3 with the PhD Program Director. If not, the form is withheld until all stipulations are completed.

Instructions for Preparing the Dissertation

Specific guidelines for preparing the dissertation are given on the following pages. The dissertation must be grammatically correct and free of typographical errors. The student, not the chair or committee, is responsible for submitting a dissertation that

reflects a high standard of scholarly writing. The student has full responsibility for the form, accuracy, and completeness of the dissertation.

Format

The dissertation should be arranged as indicated by the content checklist in Appendix D of this manual. Funding agencies are credited in the Acknowledgments section of the dissertation.

Typing

The font size must be 12. The same font should be used consistently throughout the dissertation. The dissertation should be double-spaced and utilize APA formatting. As appropriate, each manuscript should utilize the formatting of the selected journal. Appendices, figures, tables, charts, and references may be single-spaced with prior approval of the dissertation committee. Margins must be 1 inch on the top, right, left, and bottom. Pages should be numbered at the top of the page and aligned with the right margin. All pages are to be numbered consecutively from the Summary section through the appendices, including figures, tables, charts, and photographs. The introductory pages are numbered at the bottom center of the page in lowercase Roman numeral letters. Published manuscript pages are not numbered. Running headers are not permitted except in the manuscript portion. Left justification (i.e., hanging margin) is used.

Illustrations

Charts, graphs, diagrams, maps, figures, photographs, and other pictorial components must be clear, clean, and pertinent to the substance of the dissertation. Symbols or labels are preferred for identification of graphs and charts rather than color.

Lettering and symbols must be large enough to be easily readable. If colors are essential in interpreting illustrations, then they must be reproduced accurately and precisely for inclusion in the dissertation. Note that the color blue does not photocopy and should not be used in graphic illustrations. Unless the student uses photo elicitation techniques, photographs should be professional-quality black and white.

References

References are to be prepared in current APA format. References in each manuscript are to be prepared per the specifications of the selected journal.

Submission

Signatures must be obtained from every member of the dissertation committee on Form D-3. An electronic version of the dissertation in the latest version of Microsoft Word is emailed to the PhD Program Director for review of the quality of scholarship, format, and style. The student must adhere to the deadline for dissertation approval. Students who do not meet the deadline will need to enroll in one more semester to graduate.

After the final dissertation is approved by the PhD Program Director, the student must submit the items listed below to the Office of Academic Affairs no later than the last day of the semester. Again, this deadline must be met to graduate; otherwise, the student must enroll for an additional semester. The following process must be completed with the Office of Academic Affairs:

1. The original copy previously reviewed by the Office of Academic Affairs, with all markers in place, is to be reviewed again for the corrections required.
2. When the Office of Academic Affairs notifies the student that the dissertation meets

the standards of scholarship and the dissertation guidelines, the student submits the final version to the Office of Academic Affairs. Letters to be included may need to be scanned into an electronic file.

3. Together with the dissertation chair, the student selects manuscripts for presentation of the dissertation work. Manuscripts should represent scientific rigor, critical analysis and synthesis, logical development of arguments, and justification for research decisions. In addition, manuscripts require the student to meet the academic standards for scholarly writing and expression of ideas.

References

American Psychological Association. (2021). Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (7th ed.). Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Office of Human Research Protections. (2023). *Title 45, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 46*. Retrieved from <https://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/regulations-and-policy/regulations/45-cfr-46/index.html>

APPENDIX A

D1 DISSERTATION COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

D2 APPROVAL OF DOCTORAL DISSERTATION PROPOSAL

D3 APPROVAL OF DISSERTATION

Student Name: _____

Date: _____

Dissertation Title: _____

Dissertation Committee Membership

(Include name and degrees, institution and position, and area of expertise for dissertation research).

1. _____

_____ Chair Signature

Biosketch Included _____

2. _____

_____ Signature

Biosketch Included _____

3. _____

_____ Signature

Biosketch Included _____

4. _____

_____ Signature

Biosketch Included _____

5. _____

_____ Signature

Biosketch Included _____

File a copy of this form with the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and with each Committee member.

ADAA USE ONLY

DNP/PhD Committee Approval Date: _____
 DATE RECEIVED IN ADAA: _____

SIGNATURE (ADAA PERSONNEL):

APPROVAL OF DOCTORAL DISSERTATION PROPOSAL

Student Principal Investigator: _____

Title of Study: _____

This research proposal has been reviewed and approved by the Principal Investigator's Dissertation Committee.

Committee Chair: _____ Date: _____

Committee Members: _____ Date: _____

_____ Date: _____

_____ Date: _____

Dissertation Committee Recommendation:

_____ Approval

_____ Approval with Reservations

_____ Disapproval

Original to Associate Dean for Academic Affairs; Copy to Chair, Committee members, and IRB(s)

Date

To the Dean of the Cizik School of Nursing:

I am submitting a dissertation written by [Student's name] and entitled "[title of dissertation]." I have examined the final copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Nursing.

[Insert Name], Committee Chair

We have read this dissertation
and recommend its acceptance:

Accepted

Dean of the Cizik School of
Nursing

APPENDIX B

SAMPLE TITLE PAGE

BIORHYTHMS OF CARDIAC FUNCTION IN A
PORCINE MODEL OF CRITICAL CARE

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN NURSING

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS HEALTH SCIENCE CENTER AT HOUSTON CIZIK
SCHOOL OF NURSING

BY

[Insert Your Name Here]

Month, Year

APPENDIX C

SAMPLE TABLE OF CONTENTS

Sample Table of Contents

TABLE OF CONTENTS

APPROVAL PAGE	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS (Optional)	iii
ABSTRACT	iv
SUMMARY OF STUDY	
PROPOSAL.....	
Specific Aims	
Background and Significance	
Preliminary Studies.....	
Research Design and Methods	
Research Subject Risk and Protection	
Literature Cited	
Appendixes.....	

A. TABLES & FIGURES

B. APPROVAL(S)

C. DISSERTATION MANUSCRIPTS(S)

D. ADDITIONAL MANUSCRIPTS/PUBLICATIONS

APPENDIX D

EVALUATION OF PHD DISSERTATION DEFENSE PERFORMANCE



The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston (UTHealth Houston)

EVALUATION OF THE PH.D. DISSERTATION DEFENSE PERFORMANCE

- The attached evaluation is proposed to assist students and faculty alike. The evaluation should be of assistance to students since it will provide guidelines as to what will be expected of students by faculty during their defense. The evaluation should be of assistance to faculty by providing guidelines for assessing student performance during the defense. The listed features are by no means the only criteria by which students may be assessed, and they are not intended to specifically dictate to faculty how to assess student performance.
- After the PhD Dissertation Defense, the completed evaluation should be submitted to the PhD Program Director. The Dissertation Committee submits one form that reflects the composite decision of the entire Dissertation Committee.
- The final decision regarding the defense is to be made by the faculty serving on the Dissertation Committee. The quality of the defense should reflect the scores noted on the evaluation.

Student Name:

Date of Ph.D. Dissertation Defense:

Chair of Dissertation Committee:

Signature of Chair of Dissertation Committee:

Signature of Member of Dissertation Committee:

Signature of Member of Dissertation Committee:

Signature of Member of Dissertation Committee:

Additional Comments:

Return to the PhD Program Director

UTHealth Houston
 Cizik School of Nursing

Evaluated	Evaluated Subfeature	Unsatisfactory (Score=0)	Passing (Score=1)	Exemplary (Score=2)	Score
Study Implementation	Adaptation of methods during implementation, with rationale (e.g. adapting survey, recruitment plan, or analysis plan to realities of study)	Poor adaptation or unacceptable rationale for changes to proposed study plans	No adaptation required or adequate adaptation to circumstances of study, with good rationale provided for changes to the proposed study plan	Adaptation to circumstances of study resulted in improved study, with good rationale provided for changes to the proposed study plan	
	Overall implementation of study (attainment of sampling goals, quality of collected data, lab assays, conducted analysis, attention to ethics etc.)	Study findings rendered unreliable due to poor implementation	Most aspects of the study were well-implemented and sampling targets were achieved (if relevant)	High fidelity study resulted from careful attention to implementation of all aspects of the study design	
Findings and Implications	Clarity of interpretation of findings and depth of discussion	Unclear or erroneous interpretation of findings and discussion is superficial	Interpretation of findings and depth of discussion are satisfactory	Clear, consistent interpretation of findings and impressive depth of discussion	
	Grasp of broader implications of project to nursing science or other relevant sciences	Unsatisfactory understanding of implications of conducted study	Main implications of conducted study were understood and explained	Implications of study were understood in-depth and subtle connections were made to relevant sciences	
Communication	Format, flow, and quality of writing of dissertation	Dissertation is not in expected format, or hard to follow due to poor flow and/or many writing errors	Mostly well written, but with minor errors or discontinuities in some parts	Dissertation flows well and is clearly written in the appropriate format	
	Quality of oral presentation	Oral presentation was hard to follow	Engaging presentation	Poised and polished presentation	
	Handling of questions posed	Did not understand the questions or did not address the question asked	Understood questions and provided adequate answers	Understood the questions and provided clear, thorough, engaging answers	