



FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

Office of Academic Services and Intern Support

Prospectus Content and Clearance Procedures

The preparation of a dissertation prospectus is in a sense the most difficult and the most important step in the fulfillment of the research requirements for a doctoral degree. The development of a sound prospectus will assist you in conducting your research study and in writing your dissertation. To assist you in the preparation of your prospectus, a checklist of questions has been prepared for your use. These questions are not meant to make you include new subsections in your prospectus, but are intended to help you think through the initial formulation of the prospectus and/or serve as a guide for a self critique of the prospectus before you submit it to your committee. It should be remembered that there are a wide array of approaches to research and not all of these questions may be appropriate to all studies. Perhaps the best guide to developing your prospectus is to become familiar with the approaches used and questions addressed by researchers in your particular field of study.

Educational Problems or Issues, Research Questions or Hypotheses

1. Are the educational problems or the issues to be addressed in the proposed study clearly stated? Do the purposes of the study follow logically from the problems?
2. Are the research questions to be answered, or the hypotheses to be tested, or the model to be confirmed, or the phenomenon to be understood consistent with the purpose(s) of the proposed study?
3. Has an adequate case been made for the professional or theoretical importance of the proposed study?
4. Are limitations and assumptions made explicit? Are limits on generalizability from a quantitative or qualitative perspective discussed?
5. Are concepts with special or technical meaning adequately defined, explained, analyzed, and critically discussed?

Critical Review of Related Literature

1. Is the review systematically organized and are relations among the topics clear?
2. Does the review present a critical analysis and summary of the current status of the topics related to the proposed area of inquiry? Where necessary, has an appropriate meta-analysis or other literature synthesis been conducted?
3. Where appropriate, have alternative conceptions of the problem been fully explored? Is there a reasonable argument presented for choosing one concept rather than another?
4. Does the review include materials from an appropriate array of sources?

Design and Methodology

1. Given the research questions being posed, does the research strategy provide information and data necessary for answering the question(s)?
2. Have the research strategy/design, data collection and data analysis/interpretation been adequately described? Is there a clear rationale for the choice of the research strategy/design?
3. Are questions of rigor adequately addressed? For measures to be developed, how will you defend the validity and reliability of each measure? For the aggregation of qualitative data, how will you defend the trustworthiness of your analytic process?
4. Where survey and other data gathering instruments are to be used, have the concepts or constructs been sufficiently operationalized? Where qualitative ethnographic data are to be gathered, are the proposed procedures sufficiently well specified?
5. Where appropriate, have you addressed issues related to population sampling (e.g. sample size, method of sampling, risk of Type I and Type II errors, generalizability of results)?
6. Have you conducted a pilot study to see if you are going to obtain the data you expect as well as to identify possible glitches in data collection procedures?

Title, Format, Style

1. Is the title of the proposed dissertation appropriate to the subject? (clear, brief, accurate)
2. Is each bibliographic entry consistent with the style for your profession?
3. Does the body of the prospectus follow an acceptable style for your program or field of study?
4. Is the prospectus acceptably edited and typed?

PROSPECTUS CONTENT OUTLINE

I. Introduction

- Provide a clear, concise statement of the problem to be researched.
- Make a compelling argument that the problem is educationally meaningful.

II. Review of Literature

- Establish a connection between the problem and previously published literature.
- Conduct or report some form of synthesis or meta-analysis if several sources address a particular issue.
- Make use of the literature to help explain the method(s) of inquiry to be utilized.

III. Methods

- With reference to the literature review above, justify the method(s) of inquiry to be utilized, making a direct link between the problem being researched and the method(s) chosen.
- Answer, in effect, who?, when?, where?, what?, why?, and how? For method(s) to be used.
- If numerical or non-numerical data are to be collected, explain how you will justify it as adequate in both type and amount.
- Delineate the assumptions being made for every method utilized along with some justification for their tenableness.

IV. Limitations

- Conjecture as to the effect of untenable assumptions or limitations.
- Clearly describe the nature of any generalizations made in light of these limitations.
- Answer "So what?" to any conceivable outcome because of these limitations. How will you account for any conceivable outcome in the light of the limitations you have described about your research?

V. Bibliography

VI. Appendices

- Provide the results and discuss any pilot study conducted.
- Provide the approval of the Human Subjects Committee and instruments used.
- Provide any other forms, questionnaires, etc., related to the research.

PROSPECTUS CLEARANCE PROCEDURES

1. The dissertation prospectus is to be prepared in conformity with the latest edition of one of the style manuals presently in use in the College of Education. Please refer to the "Guidelines and Requirements" for Thesis, Treatise, and Dissertation Writers on The Graduate School website, <https://gradschool.fsu.edu/academics-research/thesis-treatise-and-dissertation>.
2. The prospectus is submitted to each member of the supervisory committee for review and approval. This should be done in a forum appropriate to your department.
3. The University Representative must complete a University Representative Evaluation Form (found at <https://education.fsu.edu/oasis/graduate-students>). The University Representative will evaluate the quality of the proposed research, complete the evaluation form, and forward a copy to the Office of Academic Services and Intern Support (OASIS), 2301 Stone Building, mail code: 4450 or via email to lbeverly@fsu.edu.
4. A student cannot defend his/her dissertation earlier than 4 months from the date of the academic dean's approval on the Prospectus Clearance Form (<http://education.fsu.edu/student-resources/student-academic-services-oasis/for-graduate-students>).
5. After the prospectus is approved and signed by each committee member, the prospectus and Prospectus Clearance Form must be submitted to the **Department Chair** for review and approval. (Students should consult their program/department-specific Graduate Handbook for details.)
6. Once the prospectus is approved by the Department Chair, the following must be forwarded to OASIS:
 - a. The signed Prospectus Clearance Form, approved by the committee and department chair
 - b. University Representative Evaluation Form
 - c. The completed COE IRB Verification Form (within 60 days of the prospectus defense)

Note: A copy of the approved prospectus should be returned to the major professor and/or filed in the department's student academic folder.

PROSPECTUS TITLE PAGE (SAMPLE)

FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

(TITLE OF PROSPECTUS)

By

(NAME)

A Dissertation Prospectus submitted to the Department of *(Name of Department)* in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of Doctor of *(Philosophy or Education)*

Semester Approved

Semester, Year 2020

(Example: Fall Semester, 2020)

PROSPECTUS SIGNATURE PAGE (SAMPLE)

The members of the committee approved the prospectus of _____ ,
Student's Name

defended on _ / _ / _ .
Date

Name, typed (signature)
Professor Directing Dissertation

Name, typed (signature)
University Representative

Name, typed (signature)
Committee Member

Name, typed (signature)
Committee Member

Name, typed (signature)
Committee Member (optional)

Approved:

Name, typed (signature)
Department Chair, Department