



**DOCTOR
OF
BUSINESS
ADMINISTRATION**

DISSERTATION GUIDE



*Geneva,
Switzerland
2019*

The Doctor of Business Administration Degree

The Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) degree is a professional degree for managers, leaders, consultants, and educators. It is designed for candidates from private corporations, the public sector, non-profit organizations, healthcare, and education. The goal of the DBA degree is to enhance the competencies of its candidates by providing them the skills and knowledge to make significant management and leadership contributions to their organizations and to help make those organizations more competitive. It also equips candidates to become thought leaders within their professions and to teach in higher education.

The essence of the DBA dissertation is combining knowledge from extensive personal experience with knowledge derived from original research of a practical nature. Due to the synergy of combining these “ways of knowing,” DBA dissertations can be completed more rapidly (typically 9-18 months) than most PhD dissertations, which tend to be more theoretical and less grounded in practice. Thus, DBA dissertation research is both useful and rigorous.

Following the concept of a professional degree, the DBA dissertation may utilize a variety of models and methodologies. Although some dissertations may develop theory, most will be applied research which extend or provide empirical support for existing theories and models. For example, the dissertation may take the form of case study, simulation, policy analysis, or some other format that fits the organizational research question. Although these research methods may differ in style and format, the written portion of most of these research projects should be able to follow the general format described in this guide.

Whatever methodology is selected, the research should be conducted in a rigorous and ethical manner and should make a contribution both to the candidate’s career and to the knowledge base within the profession.

What is a Dissertation?

Introduction

The Doctor of Business Administration dissertation is an original, comprehensive and scholarly investigation that makes contributions to both an academic discipline and to professional practice. Research for the dissertation is conducted using rigorous research methodologies.

At SSBM, the dissertation is a significant piece of scholarly work that demonstrates the researcher’s skills in planning, analyzing and presentation. It should encompass the skills and knowledge that the researcher has gained from practical experience as well as from the program. The research may involve traditional quantitative and qualitative methods and/or other approaches such as a case study, policy analysis, or a simulation. The research may be within the candidate’s organization or in some other context. Whatever the methodology used or

the venue of the research, the knowledge created should be of value to the industry, the profession, or the community. The dissertation will be available to the public through SSBM and the ProQuest databases.

The dissertation involves a formal process and has a formal structure. This guide explains the process for completion and the dissertation format. It provides a set of guidelines for working with the dissertation committee.

The dissertation committee provides guidance and determines whether a student has successfully completed the dissertation requirements. Selecting a good committee and establishing a good working relationship with the committee are crucial to the successful outcomes of the dissertation process.

Degree Candidacy

Advancement to candidacy marks the official point in a doctoral student's studies when he or she begins work on the dissertation. However, keep in mind that there are many opportunities throughout the coursework to explore the anticipated dissertation topic before formally entering into candidacy. Students are encouraged to refine their ideas and explore the relevant literature when such opportunities arise. Students should have selected their research questions before entering the phase of the Research Design.

The following requirements are necessary for advancement to candidacy for the Doctor of Business Administration degree.

1. A student must be in good academic standing and have maintained a minimum of 3.00 GPA upon completing all mandatory courses through SSBM's Learning Management System Portal. A
2. Students must have successfully completed the comprehensive examinations.
3. The project papers have been approved by the student's dissertation committee.

Planning for the Dissertation

The dissertation process is long and frequently arduous. Proper planning can help make that process smoother and more efficient. As previously discussed, the doctoral student should start to explore potential research topics during the early courses of the program and is encouraged to read literature related to his or her dissertation ideas, use those ideas for research papers as appropriate, and discuss those ideas with faculty and fellow students.

Students are encouraged to pose questions about the process to mentors. It is also important to develop plans to organize the volumes of research information that will be collected, stored, and retrieved during the dissertation process. It may be useful to set up a database of annotated bibliographies for key sources.

The dissertation is a major undertaking that will incur expenses. Students can expect common expenses such as printing, copying, and postage. Other expenses may include travel and other costs associated with the development and administering of surveys or other instruments, and, potentially, assistance with statistical analysis of data. Students are responsible for the cost of having an APA editor review their dissertations for format. They may also be required by their chairs to pay for a general proofreader if their writing is not doctoral quality.

The Dissertation Process

General Steps in the Dissertation Process

This guide will provide most of the information that the student will need to produce a successful dissertation. Below are the steps that should be followed when the student is ready to start the dissertation process. The remainder of the guide will provide details for each of these steps. The student:

1. Schedules a meeting with a mentor to discuss the student's ideas for the dissertation. A concept brief should be prepared for this meeting. The concept brief should be sufficiently detailed to allow the mentor to judge if the dissertation idea is of an appropriate scope, the required information will be accessible, the student will have organizational support if needed, the student has or can realistically develop the necessary skills for data collection and analysis, and a dissertation committee with the appropriate skills and background can be assembled. The brief should be limited to about five pages, but the student should be prepared to discuss the topic in more detail. Guidelines for the brief are found in Appendix A.
2. Mentor selects and recruits a dissertation committee chair.
3. Student prepares a concept paper for review by the Mentor. Approval of the concept brief (i.e. paper) is a requirement for starting Research Proposal.

4. Student registers and starts mandatory courses and maintains continuing status through the research process.
5. Mentor has to approve RM1 and RM2 outcomes and provide approval to start the Research Proposal
6. Student completes and submit the Research Proposal to his/her Mentor for the Approval.
7. Mentor sends the research proposal to the “SSBM Research Committee” which will either Approve, Decline or Conditionally Approve the Research Proposal.
8. When Research Proposal is Approved, student starts writing the Thesis.
9. Submits a Human Subjects form and obtains any other necessary permission to conduct the research (If applicable).
10. Conducts the research under the guidance of the Mentor and with appropriate support from and interaction with the dissertation committee (if needed). Submits chapter drafts on a schedule or at appropriate times as determined by the Mentor.
11. Completes the written dissertation according to school requirements and submits to committee through the Mentor, allowing a month for document review.
12. Modifies dissertation as directed by the committee. Submits presentation slides to the committee for review.
13. Submits final thesis that has to be proofread and follow all standards as defined by SSBM.
14. Presents and defends the dissertation results before the committee, colleagues, and other interested parties on the agreed dissertation date. Modifies if necessary, to gain approval. Submits drafts and final document to check for proper citations and formatting of the thesis.
15. Arranges and pays for an APA editor to review the final document (optional).
16. Submits the Dissertation to publishing Thesis Database after obtaining signatures on modified document.

Choosing a Dissertation Research Problem

The choice of a research problem is of the utmost importance in the dissertation process. It must meet the student's interests and career goals as well as the goals of the DBA program. It is recommended that the target research problem be selected before entering year 2.

What is a suitable DBA research question?

1) Manageable

- Data can be collected in six months or less, preferably less than three months
- Researcher has access to the target population or ex post facto data
- Data can be collected at moderate cost
- Question is clear and narrow
- Student has or can develop skills required to collect and analyze data with minimal guidance
- Researcher is capable of viewing the subject objectively

2) Useful to practice

- Provides value beyond the student's organization
- With suitable disguising of identities, can be made public
- Helps resolve uncertainty, explain important phenomenon, or provide a tool/guidance
- Builds on the work, theories, or practices of others
- Has strong internal validity

3) Builds on the student's industry/professional expertise

Note: For students who teach or plan to teach in higher education, it is recommended that the student enhance "academic qualification" by conducting research within the student's main discipline, such as accounting, marketing, or organizational behavior. Being academically qualified can be an important factor in accreditation processes. Often, colleges hire faculty to fill disciplinary slots rather than hiring generalists.

What are some typical research topics?

This table looks at some typical DBA research topics and relevant points that would need to be covered briefly in the research proposal introduction and more in depth in the literature review, in addition to the generic points as detailed in the Dissertation Guide. Examples of dissertations which follow a particular model are provided.

The purpose of this table is to help you structure your search of the literature.

Common Research Types	Key Points to be Covered in the Research Proposal
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<p><u>Case Analysis</u> How well does a particular theory explain one or more cases of interest?</p>	<p>Why is the topic important for practitioners? What is the theory and why is it relevant? What have other researchers established and/or what are the common practices and assumptions? What are the gaps, limits, and controversies with respect to current knowledge on the topic/application of the theory? Why is this case relevant for study?</p>
<p><u>Social Interpretation</u> How do one or more groups perceive the nature, causes, and/or outcomes of a certain phenomenon, practice, or policy?</p>	<p>Why is the topic important for practitioners? What have other researchers established and/or what are the professional assumptions? Is there a relevant theory? What are the gaps, limits, and controversies with respect to current knowledge and practices? Why is it useful to study this group (or groups)?</p>
<p><u>Practitioner Assistance</u> What new tool, technique, knowledge, or process would help practitioners in a particular situation?</p>	<p>Why is the topic important for practitioners? What evidence from other sources shows that current tools, techniques, knowledge, or processes need improvement? What have other scholars, practitioners, or relevant bodies proposed as solutions? What are the theories, if any? How will your study complement, support, or dispute these proposed solutions?</p>

<u>Controlled Experiment</u> To what extent did a change or different approaches/characteristics correlate with different outcomes?	Why is the topic important for practitioners? What have other researchers established and/or what are the professional assumptions? Is there a relevant theory? What are the gaps, limits, and controversies with respect to current knowledge and practices? Why is it useful to study this group (or groups)?
<u>Designed Intervention</u> To what extent did a different approach achieve the results predicted based on literature?	Why is the topic important for practitioners? What is the theory or professional assumption? What are the gaps, limits, and controversies with respect to current knowledge and practices? What is the prediction and the basis for the prediction? What alternative explanations will be examined? What is the value of testing this theory or assumption in the selected case(s)?
<u>Critical Evaluation</u> How well has a practice or policy worked OR what are the advantages and disadvantages of policy alternatives?	Why is the topic important for practitioners? What have other researchers asserted and/or what are the professional assumptions? Are there relevant theories? Why does this case or sample provide a useful test/analysis?
<u>Exploratory</u> What are the characteristics and dynamics of a new or poorly understood practitioner problem?	Why is the topic important for practitioners? What have other researchers established and/or what are the professional assumptions? Is there a relevant theory? What are the gaps, limits, and controversies? Why is this case or sample appropriate?

Ethics

Research involving human subjects must meet ethical standards. Such research must be conducted in a manner consistent with the policies established by organizational ethical policies. Those policies and procedures are outlined in Appendix B.

The complete policy and procedures along with the forms for permission and documentation are found on the DBA shared site. Ethics forms must be filled out even for research that does not involve people. In many cases, the submission will be judged to be exempt or expedited and will not require review by the full ethics committee. If review by the full committee is required, this could take few weeks. Your form must be approved prior to collecting data.

The Dissertation Committee

Committee Members

The dissertation committee will consist of two or three members. The committee chair should be a full-time faculty member from SSBM. A second member may be a full-time faculty or staff member or an adjunct faculty member of SSBM, and the third member (if desired) may be from outside or inside the SSBM and should be recommended by the student. Outside members must be approved by the DBA Program Director. Each committee member should represent knowledge or skills that are relevant for the dissertation. A two-member committee may be used if those members provide the necessary skills and background. The dissertation committee must be complete prior to their approval of the concept paper.

Qualifications of the Committee Members

The committee chair and a second committee member must possess earned doctoral degrees. It is strongly preferred that the third committee member also have an earned doctoral degree, however, exceptions may be made if that individual possesses unique content expertise and experience related to the dissertation topic.

The committee members collectively must have expertise in the dissertation field and the proposed research methodology. An external committee member may be a content expert, researcher, business professional, or professor at another school/university. An external person may be deemed eligible for committee membership based on expertise which is specific to the dissertation topic or methodology, but must submit curriculum vitae to the school/university. At least one committee member must have expertise in the proposed dissertation research methodology. All committee members should function as resources and provide counseling and guidance in their areas of expertise. Committee members are not merely “readers.” Although committee members will not be interacting with the student as frequently as the chair, it is expected that committee members will be providing meaningful input at least every other month (assuming that the student is actively conducting research).

Committee members must not have a relationship with the candidate that poses a potential conflict of interest (e.g., job supervisor, friend, or colleague). The DBA director will approve committee membership.

Responsibilities of the Chair and Committee Members

A description of the committee members and their respective responsibilities follows.

1. One faculty of SSBM will normally act as the committee chair.
Responsibilities of committee chair:
 - a) Help the student clarify and refine the dissertation topic.
 - b) Help the student with selection of the other committee members.

- c) Help the student establish and maintain a dissertation time line.
 - d) Utilizing input from all parties, structure roles, procedures and expectations for the student and the committee
 - e) Guide the student through the proposal process and issue formal approval with the concurrence of the other committee members.
 - f) Guide the student through the structure of the respective dissertation chapters and assure that there is agreement regarding expectations of quality.
 - g) Nurture and support the student's transition to an independent researcher.
 - h) Chair the student's dissertation defense.
2. The second committee member will be a member of the SSBM.
Responsibilities of the second committee member:
- a) Provide expertise in the content area of the dissertation or the methodology used.
 - b) Be actively involved in evaluation and approval of the research proposal.
 - c) Provide guidance and counseling in his or her area of expertise throughout the dissertation process.
 - d) Read and critique the student's drafts and completed dissertation.
 - e) Participate in the student's dissertation defense.
3. The third committee member (optional) should be a specialist with expertise in a field of study closely related to the student's dissertation topic and will usually be from outside the school/university. Responsibilities of the third committee member:
- a) Provide expertise in the content area of the dissertation or the methodology used.
 - b) Be actively involved in evaluation and approval of the research proposal.
 - c) Provide guidance and counseling in his or her area of expertise throughout the dissertation process.
 - d) Read and critique the student's drafts and completed dissertation.
 - e) Participate in the student's dissertation defense.

What don't committee members do?

Committee members do not:

- ✓ Read, organize, or critique the literature
- ✓ Design instruments
- ✓ Provide instant turnaround on documents or questions
- ✓ Run calculations
- ✓ Check calculations
- ✓ Provide a proofreading service

The committee members are advisors and evaluators. They are not co-researchers.

The committee may require the student to hire a statistics expert to check the calculations and/or

a proofreader. However, the student is responsible for developing expertise in the methodology and analysis procedures used and for explaining and defending these procedures.

Student Responsibilities

1. Read the Dissertation Guide carefully, review it periodically, and adhere to the procedures.
2. Conduct, analyze, and write-up the research with total integrity.
3. Develop and adhere to a work schedule leading to completion within a reasonable period.
4. Provide adequate time for committee members to review your work (two weeks for a chapter, one month for reviewing the entire dissertation).
5. Ensure that the most important sources relating to the topic have been included and expertly analyzed.
6. Independently develop expertise in the methodology to be used, such as survey design, online survey techniques, interview techniques, and qualitative analysis.
7. Independently develop sufficient expertise in analysis tools to select the appropriate statistics or tools, clean and format the data, conduct the analyses, interpret the results, and identify the limitations of interpretation. (Demonstrate this capability in your research proposal.)
8. Identify and objectively analyze alternative interpretations and/or limitations.
9. Submit all documents (including the proposal, dissertation drafts, and the final dissertation) in a professional and error-free APA format. Submit drafts and final documents to SafeAssign to check for correct citations.

The student may have a committee member from outside SSBM, and the use of additional outside resources and assistance is both permissible and encouraged. Examples of such assistance may be consultation with a statistician or assistance with proof reading. However, the committee must be made aware of any such assistance, and the student must assure the committee that dissertation-related analysis is conducted solely by the student.

The student is responsible for routine communication with the committee as mutually agreed with the chairperson. Correspondence related to the dissertation should be sent on a routine and timely basis to the committee chair, who may send it to the other committee members. Each committee member is responsible for the timely review and comment on the material, and for communication with the other committee members.

In general, feedback on a chapter or minor issues should be provided within two weeks. However, the student should allow one month for committee members to review the complete dissertation prior to the formal dissertation review.

Committee members may resign for any number of reasons including insufficient effort or progress by the student, lack of courtesy, and unprofessional documents. Likewise, the student may submit a request for a change of the chair or committee members to the Program Director should serious problems develop with the composition or effective functioning of the committee. Once a revised committee is approved, the student must resubmit the research proposal to the

new committee. The committee, at its discretion, may require the student to restart the dissertation process at any point including submission of a new research proposal.

Preparing the Dissertation Proposal

The Concept Paper

The concept brief is the outcome of the Research Methodology I course that will allow the Mentor to judge if the dissertation idea is of an appropriate scope, the required information will be accessible, the student will have organizational support if needed, and a dissertation committee with the appropriate skills and background can be assembled. A research problem should be posed, and one or more research questions should be formulated. A sufficient literature search should have been done so that a brief background of the problem is presented and there is confidence that the necessary information to answer the research questions will be available. A research methodology should have been considered.

Concept Brief

- Topic Introduction
- Background
- Research Questions Probability of Success
- Dissertation Committee and Assistance

This concept paper is one step closer to the more detailed research proposal. The concept paper is submitted to the Mentor for his/her feedback and approval of the proposed research.

The concept paper lays out the crucial elements and scope of the research, and it should include a discussion of the research problem and the proposed research approach and reference the key literature that will support the research. The research problem should be defined in detail, and the background and justification for the research outlined. The literature reviewed and presented should be sufficient to establish the importance of the proposed research, and to identify the theories, models, or professional assertions that will be extended or empirically examined.

The length of the concept paper should be between 3 to 6 pages; however, it should be of appropriate detail so that the student's dissertation mentor can confidently determine that the problem is appropriate for the student and can be successfully researched.

The Literature Review

The literature review is the outcome of the Research Methodology II course. The literature review part is a broad-ranging, critical view of the literature on your topic. The main aim of a literature review outcomes is to summarize and critically evaluate the literature to establish current knowledge of a topic. The literature needs to identify a gap in the literature that will be filled by the student's research.

What should you include in your literature review assignment?

Your literature review assignment should include the following:

- The main ideas, theories and concepts related to your topic.
- Areas of agreement and disagreement related to your topic
- Any problems or gaps in the literature related to your topic

Here are some things to think about:

- What are some common themes?
- Compare and contrast the various findings, arguments, theories, and methodologies in the literature.
- What do the authors agree or disagree about? What are the major areas of disagreement, controversy, or debate?
- Critique the literature; synthesize and evaluate the research, don't just describe or report it. Look for any assumptions or bias in the literature.

Your literature review should have a clearly organized structure with an introduction and conclusion. The overall literature review process is summarized on the Figure 1.

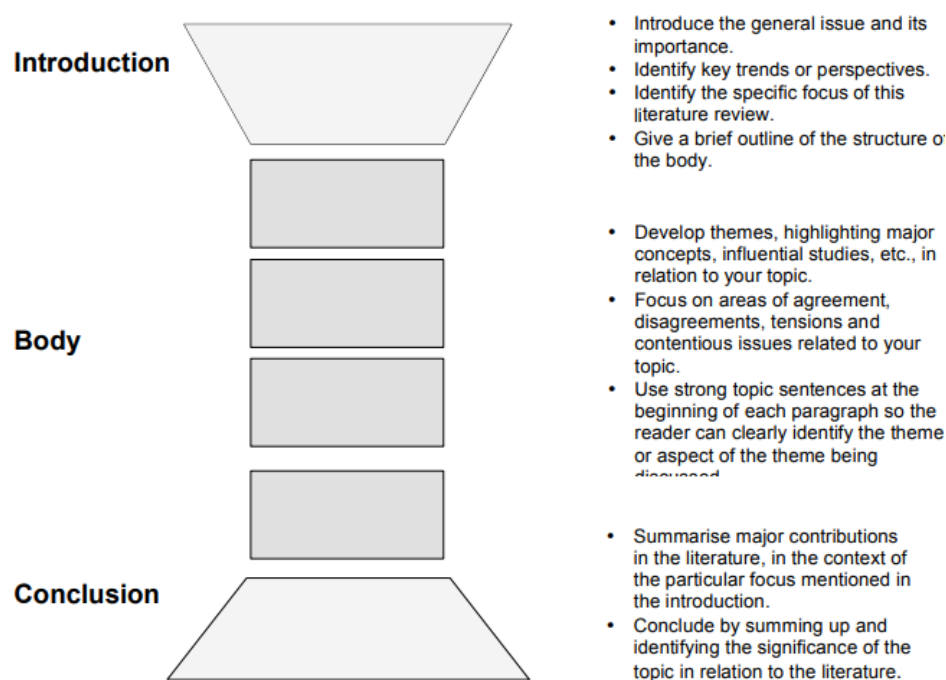


Figure 1. Overall literature review process

There is no strict requirements when it comes to the length of the literature review paper but in general it should be between 3-8 pages long. We strongly advise students to not go too much into details with the literature review as it is possible that the final thesis can change throughout the DBA journey.

The Research Proposal

The research proposal is based on the concept paper and the literature review. It expands on the

problem definition and research questions, adds the detailed methodology, and completes the detailed literature review. It typically consists of the completed first three chapters of the dissertation if the student is using a five-chapter format. It will be the blueprint for the dissertation, and it is a working contract between the student and the dissertation committee. Once the proposal has been approved, it is expected that the dissertation will be completed as specified in the proposal, unless the student and members of the committee mutually agree to proposed changes. In this case, the previously completed chapters should be revised to reflect agreed upon changes. A high-quality proposal is a major part of the dissertation process, and it is important that the proposal be as complete and detailed as possible.

The proposal must have at least the components outlined below, unless your chair has agreed to a different format.

- ✓ Title page
- ✓ Table of contents (and tables/figures/appendices, if appropriate)
- ✓ Chapter 1: Introduction
- ✓ Chapter 2: Review of Literature
- ✓ Chapter 3: Methodology
- ✓ References
- ✓ Appendices

The detailed guidance for the issues to be addressed in the research proposal (usually the first three chapters) is provided in the Dissertation Outline below. The inclusion or scope of some items may vary with the methodology chosen. Subsequent chapters are written after data collection and analysis. The student submits the Research Proposal to his/her mentor who will then send the Research Proposal to the research committee for the approval

What is appropriate rigor?

- ✓ Student has independently developed and demonstrated expertise in the selected data collection and analysis techniques (going beyond the textbooks).
- ✓ Hypotheses (or propositions for qualitative) are clear, meaningful, and testable. When possible, hypotheses are built on theory, previous research, or professional assumptions.
- ✓ Instruments have high reliability.
- ✓ Strong internal validity, including appropriate sample.
- ✓ Alternative interpretations and theories are objectively evaluated.
- ✓ Evidence is provided as to how the case or sample relates to the universe along with some discussion about how universal results might be different (directionally).

The dissertation proposal, institutional human subjects review forms, and any consent forms that will be used in the conduct of the study are submitted to the mentor who sends it to the committee members for review and approval. All dissertation research requires submission of a Human Subjects form (optional). Most DBA research can be exempted (from full Human Subjects Research Committee review) or receive expedited treatment. However, some Human Subjects forms need to be reviewed by the institutional Human Subjects Review Committee. This process will typically take 3-5 weeks. The dissertation chair will be able to provide guidance on whether full committee review is likely to be required.

The Dissertation

Implementing the Dissertation

Once the research proposal has been accepted by the dissertation committee and approval of the Human Subjects Review Protocol is granted, a working contract exists between the student and the committee. Thoroughness and quality of the proposal (often Chapters 1, 2, and 3) will contribute to effective implementation.

During implementation of the dissertation, the student should meet periodically with his or her advisors. The number of meetings will vary from student to student, depending upon the nature of the study. The purpose of these meetings is to discuss unexpected developments, explore interpretation of unusual results, and jointly develop modifications to methodology or analysis if needed. Students must continuously register mandatory courses while working on their dissertations, even if they still have an incomplete grade for mandatory courses.

Dissertation Progress Targets

The following milestones are suggested as dissertation progress targets. Students are encouraged to achieve these milestones more quickly.

Course	Target Progress at End of Course
RMI	Establish dissertation committee and gain approval of concept paper
RMII	Complete Literature review and get it formally approved by dissertation committee; submit human subjects form (if applicable)
Research Proposal	Submit Research Proposal to the Mentor who will submit it to the research committee
Thesis	Write and defend dissertation

Dissertation Outline

The following outline is generally suggested for most dissertations. However, it is possible to have a different format. If a different format is desired, reach agreement with your committee on the details.

Title page
 Signature page
 Table of
 contents List
 of tables List
 of figures
 Dedication (optional)
 Abstract

Chapter

1. Introduction
 - Statement of the problem
 - Significance of the study
 - Research questions
 - Hypotheses (replaced by objectives or propositions in some qualitative dissertations)
 - Limitations, delimitations, and assumptions
 - Definition of terms
 - Background
2. Review of the literature
 - Introduction
 - Inclusion criteria
 - Clear organizing themes
 - (Theories, models, or professional assumptions forming the foundation of the study)

Clear explanation of how dissertation research will complement previous research
Integration and critique of most important literature references)

3. Methodology

Introduction
Research design
Population and sample (as appropriate)
Data collection and instrumentation
Procedures
Data analysis
Limitations
Ethics related to human subject participation (if applicable)
Summary

4. Results

Introduction
Organization of data analysis
Findings regarding each hypothesis, research question, or objective
Summary

5. Discussion, conclusions, and implications

Introduction
Summary of the study and findings
Conclusions
Implications and applications
Future research
Summary

References

Appendices

Writing the Dissertation

Dissertation Format Requirements

The dissertation is to be written in APA style. SSBM has adopted the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (sixth edition) as its style manual, with the exception that the left margin may be 1 ½ inch if the student plans to bind the dissertation. The dissertation should follow the format specified in the APA Guide Sheet in Appendix C. The order of preliminary and text pages, pagination requirements, and samples of the title page and signature page are found in Appendix D.

In all likelihood, no other document that the student will prepare will demand as much scrutiny as the dissertation. Students may expect their writing to be thoroughly and critically judged. It is

the student's responsibility to see to it that this work is of the highest professional quality. This includes submitting the document to SafeAssign to check for proper citations and arranging to have the document checked by an APA editor. The following sections provide guidance for the chapters of the dissertation.

Chapter 1: Introduction

The introduction starts with a brief discussion of the study, which should gain the readers' attention. This is followed by a clear and concise statement of the problem, the significance or purpose of the study, and the need for the study. The research questions should be clearly stated followed by the hypotheses formulated from those questions or the research objectives or propositions in the case of qualitative research. Limitations are aspects of the situation or research design which may adversely impact the generalizability of findings. Delimitations are the boundaries the researcher has placed on the research. That is to say, what is included and what is excluded? Assumptions are those things which the study is taking for granted. Any terms which are central to the study, especially if they are not commonly known or are used in an uncommon manner, should be defined. In particular, if certain concepts or constructs are operationalized in the study, the operationalization should be briefly explained. The background information describes the context of the study and further explains its importance. This background information may be derived from any credible sources, not necessarily peer-reviewed.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

The literature review is the foundation of a dissertation that provides a framework for explaining why the study is necessary and relevant. It is an extensive, critical, and insightful review of relevant, peer-reviewed literature but will not be an exhaustive review. The literature review starts with an introduction that reminds the reader of the research problem and purpose of the study, and it outlines the scope of the literature review and how it is organized. The next section discusses the criteria used to determine which literature was considered relevant to the study and how the selection of that literature was made.

The body of the literature review is organized by topical headings. It should be organized in a way that clearly and logically convinces the reader of the necessity and relevance of the study from a scholarly perspective and establishes a solid foundation for choice of methodology. The chapter closes with a summary that ties together the main topical headings of the literature review and a brief preview of what will be presented in Chapter 3.

Other pointers for the literature review

Searching the databases will yield thousands of possible articles. Be smart and efficient with your screening process. You will be able to eliminate many of the articles produced by the search by carefully considering the title. It is also worthwhile looking at the number of citations. If this article has hardly any citations, it's probably not worth reading unless it is clearly on target and/or very recent. For titles that look appropriate, check the abstracts. If an abstract look

relevant, read the beginning and end and scan through the middle. If the content still looks germane, make an entry in your reference database along with some comments. You might choose to read the article more carefully at this point or to put it on the backburner (until you've got a better handle on its importance).

The bottom line is that you will only read a small fraction of the titles that you find in your database searches. You will be much more selective than in a typical term paper, and the sources should be of solid quality (peer-reviewed journals and high-quality practitioner and government sources rather than encyclopedias, newspapers, popular magazines, and websites).

You should be even more selective about what you include in the literature review. Use only the most relevant and strongest articles. As an ethical researcher, you should include strong articles that argue against, as well as for, your hypotheses or point-of-view. In general, sources should be recent except for selective inclusion of a few foundational works that are ubiquitously cited. More recent articles can be easily located by using the "cited by" feature.

It is particularly helpful to look at several recent dissertations that focus on topics which are similar to your research interests. Examine how the literature reviews are organized and check out references that look on target.

Many of the sources which are used in your literature review to provide background and support your discussion will be cited without providing much if any detail about the articles. Only the most important articles (relating to the core of your research) will be described, critiqued, compared, and contrasted in depth. You will probably end up using less than half of the materials you read.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter discusses the design of the research, and the detailed procedures both proposed and actually used (if different) to conduct the research. The student may write the chapter in the past tense so that it doesn't need to be changed after the research has been conducted. The procedures should be sufficiently detailed so that reliability and validity can be judged. The introduction to the chapter includes a brief restatement of the nature and purpose of the study, the research questions posed, and the hypotheses to be tested or objectives achieved.

The research design is the blueprint for the collection, measurement and analysis of the data. It describes the specific elements of the investigation used to obtain empirical evidence to answer the research questions and test the hypotheses or achieve the objectives. (It is your responsibility to become expert in the sampling, data collection, and analysis procedures used in your research. This requires reading specialized research books and watching research methods videos as well as critiquing empirical research articles using similar methods. Your committee members provide guidance, but ultimately you must become an expert and be prepared to defend your procedures.)

For quantitative statistical research the population and sample section defines the population investigated in the study and the method used to assure that a representative sample was selected from that population. The proposed sample size should be defined with a rationale for why that sample size is appropriate.

A qualitative research methodology may involve action research, a case study, or other qualitative methods. It is necessary to indicate the methods and rationale used to select the participants, groups, sites, etc., that were included in the study.

The data collection and instrumentation section must describe how each instrument was used to gather data from the sample or samples selected. A separate section should be devoted to each instrument (surveys, interviews, data mining, etc.) adopted or developed for data collection. If an adopted instrument was used, it must be properly cited and referenced, as should developed instruments that substantially use the ideas of other researchers. (Remember you should seek permission to use instruments developed by others. Occasionally, there may be a fee for use or other restrictions required by the authors.) Any instruments developed for the study must be included in the appendices along with the results of any pilot studies that may have been done. The reliability and validity of both adopted and developed instruments must be discussed, addressing similarities and differences with respect to instruments used in prior studies.

A procedures section should be used to provide the detail necessary to allow for the accurate reproduction of the study by an independent researcher. It should include all necessary details for reproduction of the research such as data collection instruments, the settings and techniques used, and institutional permissions required.

The data analysis section describes how the data was analyzed. The analysis of data depends on the design of the study and the type of data collected. The analysis may include editing and coding techniques, statistical treatments for quantitative data, logical treatments for qualitative data, and software technology used for these treatments. The analysis should include plans for handling missing data and “don’t know” or neutral responses.

Note: Chapters 1-3 are likely to require revision after data gathering and analysis are complete. However, in quantitative research, hypotheses can’t be revised.

Chapter 4: Results

Chapter 4 presents the results of the data collection and analysis. The results are presented factually and typically will utilize charts, graphs, tables, individual statistics, or any combination of these methods. What is presented and its organization is highly dependent on the design of the study.

The introduction to Chapter 4 will begin with an overview of how the data presentation is

organized. The data should be presented in the order of the research questions in Chapter 1, and these may provide a good outline for the levels and titles of subheadings. If demographic data was collected and used to determine independent variables, this is usually presented first.

Each section of Chapter 4 should present the appropriate research question, any statistical analysis, graphic displays, and the results followed by any related hypothesis and whether it was supported. The chapter should conclude with a summary paragraph of the findings.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Implications

Chapter 5 is a discussion of the findings, conclusions concerning hypotheses or research objectives, and overall conclusions. It will also address implications for professional practice and possible recommendations for implementation, and suggest specific needs for further research. The introduction to Chapter 5 begins with a review of the sections that will be in the chapter.

The summary of study and findings provides an overview of the entire study. It includes a very brief review of the key elements of the literature review and the population from which the sample was drawn. A review of the findings from the analysis of the data is presented in the same order as in Chapter 4.

The conclusions are based on the research questions formulated in Chapter 1 and are presented in that same order. The conclusions should be clearly stated and discussed. The researcher should analyze, synthesize, and evaluate the research findings and tie everything together. This chapter is the researcher's opportunity to tell the reader what the researcher thinks about the research study and perhaps challenge what was found in the literature. Limitations of the findings should be stated along with suggested future research.

The implications and applications section provides practical suggestions for addressing issues raised in the study. They may include recommendations for action and how those recommendations may be implemented.

Chapter 5 should end with a brief overview of the findings and conclusions.

Completing the Dissertation

Dissertation Submission and Evaluation

The final draft of the dissertation will be submitted to all members of the committee for review and comment. The student should allow one month for the committee members to read the document. The study will be evaluated using the criteria outlined in Dissertation Defense Evaluation form. Once the committee is satisfied with the basic content and form of the dissertation, a defense will be scheduled.

The Dissertation Defense

The defense of the dissertation is a formal, public (online or offline) proceeding in which the student presents his or her dissertation project to the committee and others who are present. The student and the dissertation chair coordinate the scheduling of the defense, and the student is responsible for preparing for the defense in collaboration with committee members and DBA faculty members. The student is responsible for knowing every aspect of the research and is answerable to the committee for the procedures, accuracy, interpretation, and integrity of the results.

The dissertation defense typically begins with the candidate presenting a brief (e.g., max 45 minutes) overview of the study, including the problem and question(s) addressed in the research, need, methodology, results, and conclusions. Following this presentation, each member of the committee will have the opportunity to raise questions. Questions may then be taken from the general audience (if offline defense is organized). A key purpose of the defense is to help establish a community of scholars. Questions help everyone become more expert on research methodology and understand the implications of the research.

When the questioning has concluded, the committee will adjourn to deliberate the status of the candidate and to discuss any modifications that need to be made to the dissertation. If the committee determines that the candidate has passed, necessary changes that have been identified by the committee are discussed with the candidate. The candidate will be asked to make those changes before committee members and the Dean officially sign the signature sheets that are published with the dissertation. Signatures must be obtained at least two weeks prior to Commencement in order to have a degree conferred.

Publishing the Dissertation

After required changes are made and approved and the APA format check is completed, an electronic version of the dissertation is to be submitted to SSBM Dissertation Publishing for publication in Dissertation Abstracts International (DAI). Submission must take place at least two weeks prior to Commencement. The doctoral degree is awarded after the DAI submission and final approval for graduation is granted. The student must have previously applied for graduation and have an approved, official SSBM graduation check.

Maintaining Continuing Status

Continuing Status

Students who have entered doctoral candidacy must maintain continuing status by registering for at least one Research Methodology course per semester unless they have been granted a leave of absence by the Director.

If a student fails to register for a Research Methodology course, and the student has not obtained a leave of absence, the student will be viewed as having voluntarily withdrawn from the program. Students are responsible for knowing and meeting the registration deadlines. In the case of

voluntary withdrawal, the dissertation committee will be dissolved. The student may reapply to the program. In considering the reapplication, the faculty committee will evaluate whether the student is sufficiently committed to the program to complete the requirements within the four year limit. The limit is measured from the date the student took the first course in the program, not the reapplication date.

Leave of Absence

A student who has entered doctoral candidacy (completed all coursework and the comprehensive examination) may apply for one leave of absence by providing an explanation of the need and the desired length of absence. Only one leave of absence is allowed, and there must be a compelling reason for granting the absence.

The DBA program director will evaluate whether the reason provided is acceptable. A serious illness of the student or a close relative would be a suitable reason. A general desire for a break or being busy at work would usually not be acceptable reasons. The student must apply for the leave of absence at least three weeks before semester registration deadline. The student's committee will be informed about the leave and its duration, and the committee will not provide any support to the student during the leave. If the leave granted is longer than one semester, the committee may choose to disband. Also, the student may be required to update dissertation documents before continuing with research.

If the student does not register for a Research Methodology class after the agreed upon leave of absence period, the student will be classified as having voluntarily withdrawn from the program.

Appendix A

Guidelines for the Concept Brief

The concept brief should be sufficiently detailed to allow the faculty member to judge if the dissertation idea is of an appropriate scope, the required information will be accessible, the student will have organizational support if needed, the student has or can realistically develop the required data collection and analysis skills, and a dissertation committee with the appropriate skills and background can be assembled. The brief should be limited to about five pages, but the student should be prepared to discuss the topic in more detail.

The following is a suggested outline for the concept brief.

Topic: Title or description of proposed dissertation topic

Introduction: Why is this proposed topic an appropriate dissertation topic?

- ✓ What does it contribute to the professional field of study? Does it address a management concern or dilemma?
- ✓ What does it contribute to the academic field of study? Does it address a gap in the academic literature or expand an academic theory?
- ✓ What does it contribute to the student's professional goals?

Background: Briefly, what is known about this proposed topic?

- ✓ What does the professional and/or academic literature have to say about this topic?
- ✓ How does this literature or a gap in this literature support the proposed topic?
- ✓ What experience or knowledge does the student or the student's organization contribute to this topic?
- ✓ What key literature references support the viability of this topic?

Research questions: What are the key research questions that need to be answered?

Probability of success: Are the factors in place to suggest that the proposed research program has a good chance of success?

- ✓ What kind of information is necessary to develop or access to answer the research questions?
- ✓ How will that information be developed or where will that information be found?
- ✓ Briefly describe the general research methodology that will be deployed and the kind of information analysis that will be used. Have other researchers in this area used a similar methodology?
- ✓ How much cooperation from other individuals or organizations will be required? How confident are you that that the required cooperation can be achieved? What potential

obstacles may hinder that cooperation or success?

- ✓ Can the results be published (perhaps with disguised identities) without jeopardizing proprietary information or the welfare of participants?

Dissertation committee and assistance: What kind of guidance and assistance is important to the success of this proposed research topic?

- ✓ What skills or knowledge do you think that dissertation committee members will need to have to provide the proper support for the research topic?
- ✓ What other assistance do you think you will need to be successful?

Appendix B

Human Subjects Review Overview

The Review Process

The fundamental responsibility of the Human Subjects Review Committee (HSRC) is to assure that all ethical issues have been fully addressed in the protection of human subjects who volunteer to participate in research studies. The Principal Investigator will most often be a student, but may be a faculty or staff member.

The HSRC considers the following:

1. The risks to the participants,
2. The anticipated benefits to the participants and to others,
3. The importance of the knowledge that may reasonably be expected to result; and
4. The informed consent process to be employed.

The HSRC reviews the information submitted by the DBA student to determine whether, if necessary, subjects are informed about the nature of the study, the details of their participation, and the voluntary nature of their participation. In addition, the HSRC weighs whether the risks and benefits of the research are evenly distributed among the possible subject populations. The HSRC is particularly concerned about protecting vulnerable parties, such as children, the mentally disabled, and prisoners. It is also concerned about protecting the rights of people who might feel coerced. For example, if a manager were to conduct a survey of direct reports, procedures need to be carefully designed to minimize a sense of coercion and well as bias.

Another concern is privacy of personal information. The researcher should store personally identifiable data in a secure fashion, preferably coding identifying information and storing the codes separately. Personally identifiable data should be stored securely for three years and then destroyed. (Data that is not personally identifiable may be kept longer than three years.)

Formal informed consent is not always necessary. When it is, the basic elements of informed consent are as follows:

1. A statement that the study involves research, an explanation of the purposes of the research and the expected duration of the subject's participation, a description of the procedures to be followed, and identification of any procedures which are experimental;
2. A description of any reasonably foreseeable risks or discomforts to the subject;
3. A description of any benefits to the subject or to others which may reasonably be expected from the research;
4. A disclosure of appropriate alternative procedures or courses of treatment, if any, that might be advantageous to the subject;

5. A statement describing the extent, if any, to which confidentiality of records identifying the subject will be maintained;
6. For research involving more than minimal risk, an explanation as to whether any compensation and an explanation as to whether any medical treatments are available if injury occurs and, if so, what they consist of, or where further information may be obtained;
7. An explanation of whom to contact for answers to pertinent questions about the research and research subjects' rights, and whom to contact in the event of a research-related injury to the subject; and
8. A statement that participation is voluntary, refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which the subject is otherwise entitled, and the subject may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which the subject is otherwise entitled.

Procedures

The following procedures will be employed in the review process:

1. The student and his or her research committee adviser will determine the anticipated risk or potential for intellectual, physical, psychological, or social injury that is associated with a student's research project. They will be responsible for ensuring ethical treatment of subjects, as required by the guidelines emanating from a division, HSRC, and participating institutions.
2. The student will complete a HSRC and submit it to the mentor. If the mentor judges the form to be complete and the procedures to be appropriate, the mentor will forward the form to a division representative on the HSRC.
3. The SSBM representative on the HSRC will assess the information received from the student's adviser, and will:
 - a) Sign off on the submitted study concept indicating that the research project is exempt from further review and the study may proceed, or
 - b) Request a meeting with the mentor and/or student to discuss the situation, or
 - c) Submit the form to another HSRC representative for an expedited review, or
 - d) Submit the form for full committee review.
4. When a form is submitted from division HSRC members to the HSRC committee, the committee or its designee(s) will deliberate and make a decision. The decision will be transmitted to the student and the research adviser and copied to the

SSBM HSRC representative.

5. Under no circumstances will a student whose research project has not been reviewed by the SSBM HSRC representative, or is under review by the HSRC, be allowed to collect data until a decision has been rendered
6. Appeals of HSRC decisions may be made by the student or his or her mentor directly to the HSRC, and thereafter, if necessary, to the Vice President of Academic Affairs.

Note: Protecting the dignity and welfare of human subjects needs to be an integral part of planning research, collecting data, analysis, and reporting. When possible, anonymous collection of data is encouraged, along with careful consideration of the amount of demographic information needed.

Appendix C

APA Guide Sheet

Left Margin:	1.5 (if binding) or 1.0 inch
Right Margin:	1.00 inch
Top/Bottom Margins:	1.00 inch
Header/Footer:	1.00 inch
Font:	Times New Roman, 12 point font
Title Page = i Signature Page = ii, etc.	Small Roman numerals, upper right corner, but number does not appear until the second page of the Table of Contents and thereafter.
Running Head:	No Running Head
Table of Contents:	Contains dedication page (optional), acknowledgement page (optional), list of tables, list of figures, abstract, chapter titles and all headings that appear in the text, and appendices. All double spaced.
Headings:	Chapter headings centered, bold, all caps, double spaced, e.g., CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION All other headings follow APA format
Tables:	Double-spaced Exception: May be single-spaced to fit on one page rather than split table onto two pages.
Block Quotes: Any quotes longer than 40 words must appear in block form.	Final punctuation appears before page reference at end of block quote. No quotation marks.
Page numbers:	12 point –UPPER RIGHT TOP CORNER OF PAGE
Definition of terms:	Should be presented in alpha order
Body text:	Left Justified, ragged right, double spaced
Block Quote Spacing:	Double spaced
1 Appendix = 2 or more =	Appendix Appendices
The title “Appendix A” can either be:	On the top of the first page of the appendix or have its own title page with the actual appendix material behind it
Each page of the appendix should receive a number, even if that number does not appear on the page. This is especially true when the appendix is a document that has not been created on your computer, therefore, a typed number cannot appear on the page.	If the document was created on the computer, include it in its proper place with a page number. If you choose to use an appendix title page with each appendix, it is to have a title and a number.

Appendix D

Page Order, Pagination, and Sample Pages

Dissertation Page Order and Pagination Requirements

- a) Title Page – counted but not numbered
- b) Signature Page – counted but not numbered
- c) Copyright Pages (optional) – counted but not numbered
- d) Table of Contents – first page counted but not numbered, additional pages are numbered in lower case Roman numerals
- e) List of Tables (if applicable) – numbered
- f) List of Figures (if applicable) – numbered
- g) Dedication (optional) – numbered
- h) Acknowledgments (optional) – numbered
- i) Abstract – numbered
- j) Chapters (begin Arabic numerals at 1)
- k) References – numbered
- l) Appendices (if applicable)

Margins: must follow margin guidelines; left margin is either 1.5 (if binding) or 1.0”; 1.0” margin on top, right and bottom

Appendix E

Informed Consent Guidelines

One of the guiding principles for research involving human subjects is respect for persons, taking into consideration their roles as autonomous agents. Thus, some level of informed consent is required in many research initiatives in which data is gathered from or about people. In some cases, informed consent needs to be rigorous and in written form. In other situations, lower levels of detail in the information provided and less formality in the consent are acceptable. Here are some guidelines on the level of consent needed in various types of research. If in doubt, err on the side of providing more information in a more formal manner.

- 1) Little or no consent needed – The presence of the following design parameters reduces the need for obtaining consent:
 - ✓ Minimal risk (physical, psychological, social, or economic) to subjects
 - ✓ Observations or responses are not identified with individuals
 - ✓ Unobtrusive observation of people engaged in routine activities
 - ✓ Surveys that take little time
 - ✓ Information is public

- 2) Informal consent needed – For informal consent, the investigator provides some information about purpose and procedures; subject grants verbal permission or subject's voluntary participation serves as evidence of consent
 - ✓ Minimal risk (physical, psychological, social, or economic) to subjects
 - ✓ Reports will not associate data with individuals
 - ✓ Surveys that take moderate time or effort
 - ✓ Observation of people in a way that is apparent, but does not greatly interfere with subjects' ability to perform their jobs or enjoy their lives
 - ✓ Formal consent has been provided by a supervisor

- 3) Formal, written informed consent needed – Any of the following conditions:
 - ✓ Some risk (physical, psychological, social, or economic) to subjects
 - ✓ Reports will associate data with individuals
 - ✓ Subjects include people who are classified by 45 CFR 46 as belonging to a vulnerable group and the research itself is not classified as exempt, such as studies of public policy

Appendix F

Dissertation Milestones

Milestone	Target Date	Completion
Determine interests & select tentative topic		
Articulate tentative research question(s)		
Conduct preliminary literature review		
Conceptualize tentative research methodology		
Start Writing concept brief		
Review concept brief with at least 1 faculty member		
Refine research question(s)		
Define clear, appropriate, testable hypotheses or solid objectives		
Define clear contribution to practice		
Recruit dissertation chair		
Gain approval of other members from dissertation chair		
Recruit other committee members		
Submit outside committee member credentials to DBA director		
Submit signed committee form, concept brief & outside member credentials/payment form to DBA admin asst		
Identify key scholarly/practitioner research areas for lit review		
Define clear boundaries for each lit review area		
Read sufficient & important sources for each lit review area		
Conduct insightful critique & analysis for each lit review area		
Determine proposed research fit with empirical literature (gap, extension?) & importance		
Explore literature on data collection and analysis methods that will be used		
Define major elements of methodology		
Develop plan for validity & reliability		
Develop plan for human subjects & ethical issues		
Write concept paper	Research Methodology I	
Discuss concept paper with mentor		
Refine research question(s), hypotheses, & objectives		
Refine organizing principles of the literature review		
Evaluate, analyze, & integrate highly relevant literature		
Refine methodology; address validity & reliability		
Refine research question, hypotheses & methodology by discussing with Practitioners		
Develop expertise in selected methodology		
Discuss methodology with scholarly experts		
Write & submit Literature Review	Research Methodology II	
Gain approval for research proposal (typically Chapters 1-3)	Research Proposal	
Start writing Thesis & Write & submit Chapter 1,2		
Write & submit Chapter 3 ; alternative formats are possible		
Revise chapters; allow for several revisions		
Submit human subjects form		

(Optional) Gain approval for proposal and human subjects form; could require up to 2 months if full committee review is required; allow 2 weeks for exempt or expedited approval		
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Milestone	Target Date	Completion
Gain approvals/make arrangements to collect data		
Pilot instrument/data collection and revise instrument and procedures		
Start data collection		
Complete data collection		
Analyze data		
Discuss rough results with committee members; agree on how to handle unexpected results or problem areas		
Write Chapter 4		
Revise Chapter 4 & get approval		
Submit petition for graduation		
Write Chapter 5; other formats are possible		
Revise Chapter 5 & get approval		
Set up defense date; your chair will make room arrangements & publicize		
Fine tune entire document; ensure consistency throughout		
Submit entire document to the mentor who will send it to the committee members, allowing 4 weeks for review		
Prepare PowerPoint presentation (typically, 30 minutes); submit to committee		
Make revisions to slides if recommended by committee		
Conduct dissertation defense; answer questions		
Address any remaining issues & get committee signatures		
Provide signed copy to DBA admin asst for Dean's signature		
After Dean's signature, electronically submit PDF		
Graduate & celebrate! (Get a life!)		