**Ph.D. Dissertation Proposal Guide**

Students who pass the written qualifying examination will then take the Dissertation Preparation course, assemble a dissertation chair and committee and prepare a dissertation proposal. It is recommended, but not required that the proposal be completed at the end of the semester following the qualifying examination to maintain momentum, structure, continuity and connection with the program and faculty.

The dissertation proposal will be defended by the doctoral candidate before their full dissertation committee. All committee members must agree that the proposal is ready for defense before the defense can be scheduled. Proposal defenses may be performed using any appropriate and relevant technology, depending on the location of committee members and the student, including but not limited to GotoTraining and conference calling.

The proposal must be structured and formatted in consultation with the dissertation chair. There are two suggested options for formatting the proposal presented below as options A and B;

**Option A**

*Length:* The dissertation proposal will be approximately 20-25 pages

*Sections:* Section order may vary, and individual students will make these decisions in consultation with their dissertation committee. The following is a brief synopsis of what is expected in each section of the dissertation proposal:

*Headings:* Section headings, of course, should follow a logical, consistent format.

**Section 1: Proposal Abstract**

Proposal abstract is about 250 words and consists of:

* one or two sentences summarizing Section 2 (Context)
* one or two sentences summarizing Section 3 (Theoretical Background)
* one or two sentences summarizing Section 4 (Methods)
* one or two sentences summarizing Section 5 (Purpose/Research Questions)
* one or two sentences summarizing Section 6 (Significance)

**Section 2: Introduction/Context**

The context section begins with an introductory paragraph that orients the reader to what will be covered in this section. This section describes the context or site or topic area where the study occurs, using support from the literature (E.g., in a study of women peacemakers in Northern Ireland, the context section would cover the Northern Ireland conflict). The context section may also focus on a particular issue, e.g. in a study on interventions in the child soldier issue, the context section might describe the child soldier issue

The section must also show a formal problem statement showcasing the need for the study and gap in the literature. It must state the purpose of the study by way of introduction to the research questions that follow.

Outline the major research question(s). Importantly, detail any sub-questions (e.g., if you’re studying forgiveness among Florida mediators, you may raise sub-questions relating to gender, ethnicity, type of practice, professional background, etc.)

The writing must be clear and concise and effectively orient the reader to the more detailed narrative that follows. The concluding paragraph of the section emphasizes the significance of the research context and site and transitions logically into the next section.

The following is a basic outline of some suggested topics to cover within this section:

* **Context/Background on topic** (the headings here can vary depending on your topic.
  + Discuss state of affairs, context, existing studies supported by literature in brief (cite using proper APA format)
  + Every time you make a statement of fact/assertion, support it with one of more sources.
* **Research Problem Statement**

(answer the following using literature to support assertions/facts)

* + the social issue or conflict under study (use various sources)
  + summary of recent studies addressing the topic or some aspect of the topic
  + the need for the study and
  + what is missing/lacking in the literature that has not been sufficiently researched that your study will address.
  + Include research question(s) and sub-questions
* **Purpose Statement**/**Research Questions**
  + Use Creswell Script as a guide for discussing your research purpose/approach:

Creswell (2007, p. 103-104):

1. “The purpose of this\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (quantitative study, narrative, phenomenological, grounded theory, ethnographic, case) study is (was? will be?) to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_(understand? describe? develop? discover?) the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (central phenomenon of the study) for \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (the participants) at \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (site). At this stage in the research, the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_(central phenomenon) will be generally defined as \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (a general definition of the central concept).”

\*\*Adapted from Creswell, John W. (2007 editions). Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc. ISBN: 978-1-4129-1607-3

1. Discuss expected at least 2 -3 goals for the study.

* **Conflict Resolution Theories:**
* Discuss Theories related to CR in brief in intro and expanded in lit review
* Definition of terms and section conclusion or summary

**Section 3: Literature review and theoretical framing**

This section reviews the theoretical literature that underlies the study. A brief review of the extant literature on the subject must be presented to illustrate that the student knows what is known so far on the topic and is conversant with developments in the area of the proposed study.

Usually two to four theoretical perspectives inform a dissertation project, and each of these bodies of theory should be presented in different sections. For example in a study on women peacemakers in Northern Ireland, the theoretical literature might cover (a) causes of ethnic conflict, (b) definitions of peace, and (c) gender theory.

The presentation should have a coherent, logical organization that in itself reflects an interpretation of the theoretical literature and how the theories will help in understanding and/or analyzing the issue. The number of references listed can vary, but a good rule of thumb is that references should number 60 to 200. Importantly, references should be up-to-date, with the majority of references within the past ten years.

**Section 4: Methodology**

Describe in detail the research procedure to be used:

* The methodology must be indicated and explicated i.e. whether quantitative, qualitative or mixed method as well as the specific methodology under each research tradition. Provide a rationale for your choice of methodology.
* The sampling and sampling criteria must be presented i.e. who are the participants, or what are the data texts, how many they are and why them and not others. You also need to explain how access will be obtained, the ethical concerns such as confidentiality as well as the potential risks and benefits to participants (even if the risks are minimal).
* Explain the data gathering or data generation techniques (detailed rationale and description of how data will be gathered).
* Explain the data analysis (description of and rationale for the data analysis process.
* Sometimes, there is an additional body of theory that is relevant to the methodology, for example a particular type of methodology (e.g., semi-projective tests, narrative methods, etc.) may require some description and theoretical support.

A concluding paragraph summarizes the section and transitions to the next section.

**Section 5** **Significance of the Study**

In this concluding section, the significance of the study is pointed out e.g.:

* how and/or why the study will advance knowledge within the conflict resolution and/or peace studies fields;
* how the study will contribute to the development of theoretical knowledge;
* what practice-related contributions the study might make; and/or
* what policy implications the study might have.

**Option B**

This option is really a preliminary draft of the first three chapters of your final dissertation. It must be developed in very close consultation with the dissertation chair and the committee. Your chair and committee will guide you as to the length of the proposal.

It is best to make the layout resemble as closely as possible the dissertation template on the Student Resource page of the departmental webpage. What is given below is an abbreviated sample. Keep in mind that this will all need revision and editing after the data has been collected, analyzed and findings made so as to take into consideration the completed research project. Especially, take care to change from future tense to past tense in the final dissertation draft.

[Dissertation Title]

by

[your official name]

A Dissertation Presented to the

College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences of Nova Southeastern University

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Nova Southeastern University

20XX

Copyright © by

[your official name]

[Month Year]

**This is an optional page.** **Nova Southeastern University**

**College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences**

This dissertation was submitted by \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ under the direction of the chair of the dissertation committee listed below. It was submitted to the College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences and approved in partial fulfillment for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Conflict Analysis and Resolution at Nova Southeastern University.

**Approved:**

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Date of Defense *Committee Chair Name*, Ph.D.

Chair

*Put in the names and delete the instruction*

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

*Committee Member Name*, Ph.D.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

*Committee Member Name*, Ph.D.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Date of Final Approval *Committee Chair Name*, Ph.D.

Chair

Dedication

This is an optional page for a dedication. If you include a dedication, use regular paragraph spacing as shown here (not centered, italicized, or otherwise formatted). If you do not wish to include this page, delete the heading, the body text, and the page break below the end of the text.

Acknowledgments

This is an optional page for acknowledgments. It is a nice place to thank the faculty, family members, and friends who have helped you reach this point in your academic career.

No page number appears on any of the pages up to this point. If you do not wish to include this page, delete the heading and the body text; if a blank page remains, delete the page break above but leave the section break that you see below this text.

Table of Contents

[List of Tables ii](#_Toc259446893)

[List of Figures iii](#_Toc259446894)

Abstract………………………………………………………………………… iv

[Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study (Level 0 Heading) 1](#_Toc259446895)

[Background 1](#_Toc259446896)

[APA Level 2 Heading 1](#_Toc259446897)

[Chapter 2: Literature Review 3](#_Toc259446898)

[First Heading 3](#_Toc259446899)

[Chapter 3: Research Method 4](#_Toc259446900)

[First Heading 4](#_Toc259446901)

[References 8](#_Toc259446906)

[Appendix A: Title of Appendix 9](#_Toc259446907)

*Use this table of contents (TOC) as an example of what one looks like. When it comes time for creating your own TOC, RIGHT CLICK anywhere in the Table of Contents, select UPDATE FIELD, then select UPDATE ENTIRE TABLE or UPDATE PAGE NUMBERS ONLY, and click OK.*

*The table of contents will be generated using the style tags from the template; you will also be able to automatically update the TOC, both added headings and page numbers.*

List of Tables

[Table 1. A Sample Table Showing Correct Formatting 5](#_Toc239582816)

*When you update the list of tables, the table number and title will come in without a period between them; you will need to manually add that period after all table numbers, as shown for Table 1. In addition, the title will retain the italics from the narrative when the List of Tables is updated. Once your list is finalized, select the entire list and change it all plain type*.

List of Figures

Figure 1. Figure caption goes here xx

*The List of Figures is not set up to automatically update. If you have figures in your document, type them in manually here, following the example above.*

Abstract

Your abstract should follow the APA formatting standards and be no more than 250 words and no longer than one page. Abstract text must be double-spaced with no paragraph breaks. Describe the overall research problem being addressed in the first couple of sentences and indicate why it is important (e.g., who would care if the problem is solved). You can include a general introduction of the issue in the first sentence, but you need to move to a clear statement of the research problem being addressed. Identify the purpose and theoretical foundations, if appropriate, summarize the key research question(s), and briefly describe the overall research design, methods and data analytic procedures. Here are some form and style tips: (a) maintain the scholarly language used throughout the dissertation proposal and later the final draft; (b) keep the abstract concise, accurate, and readable; (c) use correct English; (d) ensure each sentence adds value to the reader’s understanding of the research; (e) make sure to carefully edit the abstract for grammar, expression and typos; and (f) use the full name of any acronym and include the acronym in parentheses. Do not include references or citations in the abstract. Per APA style, unless at the start of a sentence, use numerals in the abstract, not written out numbers.

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study (Level 0 Heading)

In this chapter, you need to outline the major research question(s). Importantly, detail any sub-questions. E.g., if you’re studying forgiveness among Florida mediators, you may raise sub-questions relating to gender, ethnicity, type of practice, professional background, etc.

The context of the research should be provided in this chapter, for example in a study of women peacemakers in Northern Ireland, the context section would cover the Northern Ireland conflict. The context section may also focus on a particular issue, e.g. in a study on interventions in the child soldier issue, the context section might describe the child soldier issue. The concluding paragraph of the section emphasizes the significance of the research context and site and transitions logically into the next section.

The concluding section of the chapter should give the lay out of the rest of the draft, similar to what you will have in the final dissertation draft. The following is a basic outline of some suggested topics to cover within this section:

* **Context/Background on topic** (the headings here can vary depending on your topic).
  + Discuss state of affairs, context, existing studies supported by literature in brief (cite using proper APA format)
  + Every time you make a statement of fact/assertion, support it with one of more sources.
* **Research Problem Statement**

(answer the following using literature to support assertions/facts)

* + the social issue or conflict under study (use various sources)
  + summary of recent studies addressing the topic or some aspect of the topic
  + the need for the study and
  + what is missing/lacking in the literature that has not been sufficiently researched that your study will address.
  + Include research question(s) and sub-questions
* **Purpose Statement**/**Research Questions**
  + Use Creswell Script as a guide for discussing your research purpose/approach:

Creswell (2007, p. 103-104):

1. “The purpose of this\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (quantitative study, narrative, phenomenological, grounded theory, ethnographic, case) study is (was? will be?) to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_(understand? describe? develop? discover?) the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (central phenomenon of the study) for \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (the participants) at \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (site). At this stage in the research, the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_(central phenomenon) will be generally defined as \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (a general definition of the central concept).”

\*\*Adapted from Creswell, John W. (2007 editions). Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc. ISBN: 978-1-4129-1607-3

1. Discuss expected at least 2 -3 goals for the study.

* **Conflict Resolution Theories:**
* Discuss Theories related to CR in brief in intro and expanded in lit review
* Definition of terms and section conclusion or summary

\*\*\*Below is the APA format for developing the chapter and its headings.

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study (Level 0 Heading)

Opening paragraph starts here

**Level 1 Heading**

Place your text here.

**APA Level 2 Heading**

Place your text here; when placing your cursor on this text, you will see in the style menu that this paragraph is tagged “Body Text.” That means it will automatically appear double-spaced with the first line indented. The sixth edition of the APA manual advises two character spaces between sentences. Either one or two spaces; either is acceptable, just be consistent. The text in this template has one character space between sentences.

To apply this template’s formatting to the text of your paper, simply highlight the paragraph(s) or heading you want to format, and choose the appropriate tag from the style menu. The list of style tags includes all levels of headings, block quotes, table and figure captions, references, and body text.

**APA level 3 heading**. Text begins here.

***APA level 4 heading***. Text begins here. The following is an example of a block quote:

This is an example of a block quote. Now is the time to do the work that needs to be done. This is an example of a block quote. Now is the time to do the work that needs to be done. This is an example of a block quote. Now is the time to do the work that needs to be done. This is an example of a block quote. Now is the time to do the work that needs to be done. (Author, date, p. #)

Chapter 2: Literature Review

**First Heading**

Insert the text of your literature review here. The chapter reviews the theoretical literature that underlies the study. A brief review of the extant literature on the subject must be presented to illustrate that the student knows what is known so far on the topic and is conversant with developments in the area of the proposed study. Report the literature in past tense, as in Jones (2003) argued, not Jones (2003) argues.

Usually two to four theoretical perspectives inform a dissertation project, and each of these bodies of theory should be presented in different sections. For example in a study on women peacemakers in Northern Ireland, the theoretical literature might cover (a) causes of ethnic conflict, (b) definitions of peace, and (c) gender theory.

The presentation should have a coherent, logical organization that in itself reflects an interpretation of the theoretical literature and how the theories will help in understanding and/or analyzing the issue. The number of references listed can vary, but a good rule of thumb is that references should number 60 to 200. Importantly, references should be up-to-date, with the majority of references within the past ten years.

Chapter 3: Research Method

**First Heading**

Describe in detail the research procedure to be used:

* The methodology must be indicated and explicated i.e. whether quantitative, qualitative or mixed method as well as the specific methodology under each research tradition. Provide a rationale for choice of methodology.
* The sampling and sampling criteria must be presented i.e. who are the participants, or what are the data texts, how many they are and why them and not others. You also need to explain how access will be obtained, the ethical concerns such as confidentiality as well as the potential risks and benefits to participants (even if the risks are minimal).
* Explain the data gathering or data generation techniques (detailed rationale and description of how data will be gathered).
* Explain the data analysis (description of and rationale for the data analysis process.
* Sometimes, there is an additional body of theory that is relevant to the methodology, for example a particular type of methodology (e.g., semi-projective tests, narrative methods, etc.) may require some description and theoretical support.

**Conclusion** **Significance of the Study**

In this concluding section, the significance of the study is pointed out e.g.:

* how and/or why the study will advance knowledge within the conflict resolution and/or peace studies fields;
* how the study will contribute to the development of theoretical knowledge;
* what practice-related contributions the study might make; and/or
* what policy implications the study might have.