
The COLLEGE of EDUCATION
FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY



PROSPECTUS CONTENT OUTLINE

CLEARANCE PROCEDURES

Effective Date: January 1, 2001

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SUGGESTIONS FOR PREPARING A PROSPECTUS

The preparation of a prospectus for a dissertation 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 the conduct of your research study and in the writing of 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 doctoral supervisory committee. It should be remembered that there are a wide array of approaches to research, so 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

6. Is the review systematically organized and are relations among the topics made clear?
7. 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?

8. Where appropriate, have alternative conceptions of the problem been fully explored? Is there a reasonable argument presented for choosing one concept rather than another?
9. Does the review include materials from an appropriate array of sources?

Design and Methodology

10. Given the research questions being posed, does the research strategy provide information and data necessary for answering the question(s)?
11. 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?
12. 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?
13. 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?
14. 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)?
15. 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

16. Is the title of the proposed dissertation appropriate to the subject? (clear, brief, accurate)
17. Is each bibliographic entry consistent with the style for your profession?
18. Does the body of the prospectus follow an acceptable style for your program or field of study?
19. 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. This should be obtained from the Office of Graduate Studies, 408 Westcott.
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 outside committee member should be given an *Outside Committee Member Evaluation Form*. The outside committee member should evaluate the quality of the proposed research, complete the evaluation form and forward it to the Associate Dean for Graduate Studies and Research, 236 Stone Building, Mail Code 4450.
4. **The dissertation prospectus must have an approval date of four months prior to the dissertation defense date** (refer to Graduate Deadlines Calendar).
5. After approval and signature of the prospectus by each supervisory committee member, the following should be **submitted to the Department Chair** for review and approval:
 - a. One complete paper copy of the prospectus;
 - b. One complete copy of the prospectus on disk (IBM formatted in Microsoft Word 97 document)
 - c. One three (3) page summary;
 - d. Four (4) additional title/signature pages;
 - e. Four (4) copies of the Prospectus Clearance Form;
 - f. One self-addressed label or envelope for the student.

Note: The paper copy of the prospectus should be returned to the major professor or filed in the department's student academic folder.

6. If the prospectus is approved by the Department Chair, **items b. through f.** should be forwarded to the Associate Dean for Graduate Studies and Research for distribution.

NOTE: The electronic copy of the prospectus will be filed in Vol3 on Coeserv1 K:\Coe\Prospectus\ for reference purposes.

PROSPECTUS TITLE PAGE

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 20_____
(Example: Fall Semester, 2001)

PROSPECTUS SIGNATURE PAGE

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

defended on ____/____/____.
Date

_____(signature)
Name, typed
Professor Directing Dissertation

_____(signature)
Name, typed
Outside Committee Member

_____(signature)
Name, typed
Committee Member

_____(signature)
Name, typed
Committee Member

_____(signature)
Name, typed
Committee Member

Approved:

_____(signature)
Name of Department Chair, Chairperson, Name of Department

Note: See next page for an example.

SAMPLE PROSPECTUS SIGNATURE PAGE

The members of the committee approved the prospectus of Caroline Smith on June 15, 2001.

_____(signature)
Catherine Doe
Professor Directing Dissertation

_____(signature)
Paul Jones
Outside Committee Member

_____(signature)
Leslie Carr
Committee Member

_____(signature)
Marvin Askew
Committee Member

Approved:

_____(signature)
Fred Brown, Chairperson, Department of Education

COE PROSPECTUS POLICIES

POLICY No: V-B6

EFFECTIVE DATE:

TOPIC: **POLICY FOR THE REVIEW OF PROSPECTUSES IN THE COLLEGE OF EDUCATION**

RESPONSIBLE OFFICE: DEPARTMENT CHAIR

Rationale

The dissertation prospectus serves as an agreement between the student, the supervising committee, the Department, and the College of Education. It is designed to protect the interests of each of these in the production of high quality educational research studies.

Procedures

- A. The major professor and supervisory committee will establish procedures for the development and committee approval of the prospectus.

The prospectus will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

1. The social and/or professional problems are well formulated.
2. Literature review is synthesized well.
3. Purpose of the research is clearly stated.
4. Questions and objectives or hypotheses capture the purpose.
5. Research methods and data to be collected will answer questions posed.
6. Contribution of the study to the discipline or profession is evident.
7. The study is appropriate in scope for a doctoral dissertation.

The signatures of the major professor and supervisory committee members indicate that these criteria (i.e., A: 1–7) have been met and the student's preparation is appropriate for engaging the study. In addition, the outside committee member will complete the *Outside Committee Member Evaluation Form* and forward it to the Associate Dean for Graduate Studies and Research in the College. The signed prospectus will be forwarded to the Department Chair.

- B. The department chair or his/her representative or delegate will review each prospectus to assure that these criteria (i.e., A: 1–7) have been met to the department's satisfaction. The department chair's signature will indicate that these criteria have been met.
- C. Following the department chair's approval, a copy of the prospectus, three page abstract, and forms are forwarded to the Associate Dean for Graduate Studies and Research. The Associate Dean will notify the COE Academic Services and the Office of Graduate Studies of an approved prospectus and keep on file a copy of the approved prospectus and the *Outside Committee Member Evaluation Form*.
- D. By January 15, the Associate Dean for Graduate Studies and Research will prepare a summary report for the preceding year for the Faculty Council. The report will include at a minimum a list of approved prospectuses by department to include student name, prospectus title, major professor and committee members, and a summary of ratings on the *Outside Committee Member Evaluation Forms*. A copy of the report will also be forwarded to the Standards committee along with copies of the individual *Outside Committee Member Evaluation Forms*.
- E. Following the receipt of the report and *Outside Committee Member Evaluation Forms*, the Standards Committee may elect to review a sample of prospectuses not to exceed more than 10% of the number submitted in the year. Should there be questions regarding the quality of a department and/or program's prospectuses, the Committee may recommend that the department/program's prospectuses submitted that year be reviewed with the same level of detail as the supervisory committee and department chair by the Associate Dean for Graduate Studies and Research. The Standards Committee will determine the timeframe for this level of review. Should there be serious and consistent deficiencies in the quality of the proposed studies, the Standards Committee, the Associate Dean, the Department Chair, and the Dean will convene to formulate courses of action to remediate the deficiencies.

POLICY No: V-B 7

EFFECTIVE DATE:

TOPIC: **DISSERTATION APPROVAL AND REVIEW**

RESPONSIBLE OFFICE: Department Chair

The major responsibility for maintaining standards for the quality of the dissertation lies with the candidate's supervisory committee.

The Department Chair Review

The Department Chair's signature on a dissertation means that: (1) the study has been conducted in accordance with the approved prospectus; (2) the quality of analyses, discussion, and presentation of the manuscript is acceptable for a doctoral dissertation; and (3) the doctoral supervisory committee has followed procedures as stated in the FSU Graduate Bulletin and the College.

SAMPLE SIGNATURE PAGE (DISSERTATION ONLY)

(2 inches down)

The members of the Committee approve the *(thesis/treatise/dissertation)* of

_____ defended on ____/____/____.
(student's name) *(date defended)*

_____ (signature)
Name, typed
Professor Directing *(Thesis/Treatise/
Dissertation)*

_____ (signature)
Name, typed
Outside Committee Member

_____ (signature)
Name, typed
Committee Member

_____ (signature)
Name, typed
Committee member

Approved:

_____ (signature)
Name of Chair, Chair, Department Name
(EX. Carol Avery, Chair, Department of Clothing and Textiles)