

## **Three Article Dissertation**

Students should decide as early as possible, in concert with their dissertation chair, whether to pursue the 3-article dissertation format. However, they may switch from one format to the other at any time provided their dissertation committee approves the change.

### **What Must Be Included**

1. The articles dissertation should be comprised of a minimum of three articles. The articles should form a cohesive body of work that supports a theme or themes that are expressed clearly in the introduction of the dissertation (Chapter 1). The need for three articles (as opposed to just two) should be clear and approved by the dissertation committee, and not merely represent minor tweaks of a work that would be more appropriately reported in just one or two articles.
2. The dissertation must include an abstract that synthesizes the articles, as well as an introduction (Chapter 1) and a conclusion (Chapter 5) that discusses the synthesis of what is learned from the three articles.
3. The introduction should function as the cord that weaves the various manuscripts together and describes, for the reader, their ‘collective meaning’ and ‘combined contribution’ to the field. It should include:
  - a. A definition or statement of the problem
  - b. The importance of the problem, i.e., why it is worth researching, why it matters to the field of social work.
  - c. The theoretical foundation(s) supporting the problem/issue.
  - d. An overview of the important literature (overview, because each article will have its own unique literature review).
  - e. The research questions.
  - f. The methodology used to answer those questions.
4. The conclusion will briefly summarize the dissertation’s major findings, limitations, discussion, and recommendations. The student will also present and discuss linkages (i.e., similarities and differences) between the separate manuscripts that are included in the dissertation, striving as much as possible to present the document as representative of a coherent body of work. The conclusion chapter ‘ties’ everything together and helps the reader see how the various manuscripts, taken together, contributes to the knowledge base regarding the problem. The conclusion chapter should present/discuss research imperatives, or knowledge gaps, not visible when each manuscript is considered individually and should articulate how the findings from the three articles guide social work practice, policy, and education, and sets an agenda for future research on the issues addressed in the dissertation.

### **Dissertation Proposal**

5. The dissertation proposal must include:
  - a. The introductory chapter.
  - b. Copy of any pre-published article to be included in the dissertation (no more than one already completed article can be presented).
  - c. An outline of any articles in progress.

- d. A list of proposed journals.
- e. A timeline for completion of the work.

The defense of the dissertation proposal is expected to parallel the proposal defense for a traditional dissertation. The three-article dissertation alters the format, but not the content, expected in the dissertation research.

### **Final copy**

6. The final copy of the dissertation should be formatted and bound consistent with UT dissertation guidelines for a 3-article dissertation. At The University of Texas at Austin, dissertations must be “coherent and consistent in appearance throughout, which means that previously published material must be printed using the same font and format as the rest of the dissertation.”

<https://gradschool.utexas.edu/sites/default/files/Format%20Guidelines%20Final%205-15-17%20.pdf>

### **Authorship**

7. Students must be first author on all articles. As first authors, students are responsible for development and articulation of a concept or idea for research, development of a proposal to pursue this idea, development of a research design, conducting research and analysis, writing major portions of a manuscript, designing an intervention or assessment (if relevant), and interpreting results.

8. No other students can be co-authors on any of the articles. Co-authors must be identified at the student’s proposal defense. The article and the role of the co-authors must be presented to and approved by all members of the dissertation committee. The student’s committee must approve any changes in co-authorship. In addition, the student must indicate the percentage of effort and description of the role played by each author in the introductory chapter to the dissertation.

### **Content**

9. At least two of the articles should be based on data that are analyzed by the student. If the third article is conceptual in nature, or based on a systematic review of the literature, it must be connected to the theme or themes of the dissertation without overlapping heavily with the contents of either article. Whether the extent of any overlap is excessive will be determined by the student’s dissertation committee.

10. A certain amount of overlap is acceptable. For example, portions of the literature review may need to be cited in the various articles because it delineates the entire historical background of the study’s focal topic. Redundancy can be carefully reduced by citing one’s own work. However, self-plagiarism - reusing one’s own previously written work or data in a ‘new’ written product without letting the reader know that this material has appeared elsewhere - is prohibited.

### **Copyright**

11. Students must secure all copyright permissions before finalizing the proposal and formatting the dissertation. Some journals might have copyright peculiarities that make it not worth the trouble to include that specific article in the dissertation. All of these issues should be considered early on in the process. The student should make sure that this entire process is compliant with UT dissertation format guidelines (see Deadlines and Forms, Format Guidelines)

12. Copyright issues frequently arise with previously published material. The student needs to obtain permission to duplicate copyrighted material (and, possibly, multiple author releases). Students should check with the UT Graduate School to make sure they are in compliance with University dissertation guidelines and copyright regulations.

### **Publication Requirements**

13. It is expected that the three articles submitted for the defense be of publishable quality. It is acceptable for a student to include a previously published journal article in the three-article dissertation, as long as (a) all authorship requirements in our School's guidelines are adhered to, (b) the dissertation committee agrees to a published manuscript's inclusion as an integrated and substantial chapter of the dissertation and (c) the student receives continuous feedback and approval of that article from their dissertation supervisor and committee members during the publication process. That includes quality of the article, journal submission, response to reviews of the article, and guidance on acceptance. The student must obtain copyright permission from the publishing journal to include the article in his/her dissertation. U.S law requires doing so. When asking for permission to include the article in the dissertation, students should notify the journal editor that the dissertation will be made available on-line. Uploading the dissertation to the Texas Digital Libraries at UT is a requirement of graduation.

“Graduating students are required to publish their thesis, report, dissertation or treatise digitally by [uploading](#) a single PDF to the Texas Digital Library (TDL). [Technical support](#) is available. [Click here to begin your submission](#). The TDL provides students with an option to request the supplemental submission of their ETD to ProQuest. Students selecting this option must approve the ProQuest license agreement in the TDL, in addition to approving the TDL license agreement. Approved ETDs will be sent electronically to ProQuest once the degree is certified, or after approved embargoes have expired. There are no additional fees associated with ProQuest publication.”

### **Publication Guidelines**

14. Journals to which articles are being submitted must be approved by the dissertation committee. Serving as an “editorial board” for the student, the committee will help select journals that will challenge the student and offer a reasonable chance of publication success.

15. A maximum of one article published or accepted for publication after the *proposal defense* may be included. This article must represent work undertaken while the student is enrolled in the PhD program and be approved by the committee. This article must be connected to the theme or themes of the dissertation. If a published article is approved by the committee, the student will be responsible for securing necessary permissions from the copyright holder and other authors.

16. If an article is rejected by a journal during the dissertation process, the student may submit to another journal approved by the dissertation committee. In the case of a revise and resubmit during the dissertation process, any changes to the article must be approved by the dissertation committee. Co-authorship will not be changed for a revise and resubmit.

17. If an article is rejected by a journal after the successful completion and defense of the dissertation, co-authorship decisions that were made during the dissertation process will no longer be in effect. Submission to a new journal will be at the sole discretion of the PhD graduate. Also after the successful dissertation defense, any new submission or re-submission, including changes in the authorship or article content, will be at the discretion of the PhD graduate.

18. If the journal reviewers suggest modifications to any of the three submitted manuscripts prior to the dissertation defense, a plan for addressing those suggestions should be shared with dissertation committee members and approved by all of them before the changes are enacted. Changes can be made to any of the three manuscripts if the dissertation committee members are aware of and agree to the changes being made and their rationale. Students may opt to defer changes requested by a journal to which they have submitted an article until their dissertation has been successfully defended.

### **Submission**

19. As with any other dissertation, students must submit their manuscripts to their committee members at least 4 weeks prior to the defense for a preliminary review.

The Graduate School will defer to the judgment of the dissertation committee as long as there is cohesiveness of the three-article dissertation with sufficient explanation as needed regarding the student's contributions in the case of co-authorship on a given article.

### **Links**

20. Deadlines and Submission Instructions:

<https://gradschool.utexas.edu/academics/graduation/deadlines-and-submission-instructions>

21. Format Guidelines: <https://utexas.app.box.com/s/k17drbeubyoujbibghliwmemvvc4d1kq>

22. Fair Use Guidelines: <https://gradschool.utexas.edu/academics/theses-and-dissertations/doctoral-candidacy/copyright-tutorial/fair-use-guidelines>