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WILLIAM WOODS  
UNIVERSITY

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**Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) in Educational Leadership  
Dissertation Handbook**

School of Education  
William Woods University  
Fulton, MO

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## Overview

### About this Handbook

This handbook is published by the William Woods University School of Education. All policies and procedures are approved by the Director of the School of Education, the Chair of Doctoral Studies, the Chair of Dissertations and the doctoral faculty. This handbook is posted on the William Woods website and updated periodically. The version posted on the website will serve as the current copy and will supersede all other versions. Any student appeals to the policies and procedures in this handbook should be directed to the Chair of Doctoral Studies.

The dissertation is based on the student's systematic inquiry into an area of educational leadership or programming. A primary component for the timely completion of the dissertation is the development of the dissertation proposal. This proposal, once approved by the dissertation chair and dissertation committee will serve as the basis for research and writing through the remaining enrollment periods. Dissertation conceptualization, research, and writing are further supported by linking and integrating doctoral coursework to the student's particular academic focus.

### Stages of the Dissertation

Candidates will be expected to complete a dissertation typically using a quantitative, qualitative, or mixed research design. A candidate must stay continuously enrolled in dissertation hours until completion and defense of the dissertation (see the latest University catalog for details). Requirements may include any or all of the following, which are presented chronologically:

- The research proposal should relate to an education issue with an educational leadership focus.
- The proposal should begin with a review of the research problem.
- The proposal should include a critical analysis of the problem with the application of higher learning skills.
- The proposal should include a comprehensive review of related literature starting with a historical view and progressing through broad-based literature to the more specific research concerning the issue.
- The proposal should contain a methodological approach that applies the appropriate assessment and review of data.
- The student will make a presentation in committee and seek approval from the dissertation committee to proceed with the research.

- The student must obtain approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for human subject research with appropriate confidentiality statements.
- The student will conduct the research.
- The student will develop appropriate interpretation of research results and discuss conclusions of the findings and implications of the study.
- The student will defend the dissertation in an open presentation in front of students, faculty, and the dissertation committee.
- The student will submit an electronic copy to the university upon approval of the dissertation committee.

The dissertation can generally be completed in 14 to 18 months following approval of the proposal by the dissertation committee. The timing of each stage is tailored to each student with the advice of the dissertation chair and will vary based on research content and methodology.

The writing style of dissertation will be American Psychological Association (APA) style following the most current edition when the dissertation is completed. Any modifications to APA style will be outlined in this handbook and will take precedence over APA guidelines.

### **Chair Information Form**

During Dissertation Proposal Seminar (EDU780), students will submit a Chair Information Form describing the research topic he or she is hoping to address in the dissertation.

This document is not a contract – the student may propose to write on another topic. The Chair of Dissertations will use the information forms to help appropriately match students with dissertation chairs.

### **Admission to Candidacy**

Students that satisfactorily complete the Ed.D. coursework and score satisfactorily on the written comprehensive examination will be admitted to doctoral candidacy. This signifies that the student is a doctoral candidate actively pursuing the completion of his/her dissertation research.

### **Chair and Committee – Qualifications and Roles**

Each candidate will have a dissertation committee consisting of a committee chair, and two additional committee members. Each committee member must have an earned doctoral degree, typically an Ed.D. or Ph.D. The chair will be assigned by the Chair of Dissertations. Each committee must include at least one full-time University

faculty member. Faculty serving as committee chairs or committee members are approved for those responsibilities by the Vice President and Dean of Academic Affairs. The committee chair will work with the candidate during Dissertation Seminar (EDU781) to refine a topic. Next, the chair will work with the candidate to develop the first three chapters before referring the proposal to the committee members. Once the candidate receives the committee approval, the proposal will go to the IRB for final approval. Following IRB approval of the proposal, the candidate may begin data collection and analysis process. No data can be collected prior to IRB approval. The dissertation proposal should include the introduction, literature review, and research methodology.

Candidates will remain in continuous enrollment in dissertation graduate credit until completion and defense of their dissertation. They will enroll in Research Seminar (EDU790) the semesters after the Dissertation Seminar course. The dissertation must be completed and defended within five years after the date of passage of the written comprehensive examination.

### **Submitting and Reviewing the Dissertation Proposal**

The student will work with the dissertation chair during Dissertation Seminar (EDU 781) and for any additional length of time necessary to develop an acceptable dissertation proposal. The chair sets deadlines for chapter submissions and final draft submission. The chair shall correspond with the student periodically and as needed to keep track of progress and to provide detailed feedback on drafts. The dissertation chair will also, on an as-needed basis, communicate with and update the dissertation committee on the progress of the dissertation proposal.

The chair will review the proposal to make sure it is complete and satisfies all requested revisions and email it to the full committee.

The committee members will then have two weeks to review the dissertation proposal. At the end of that period, each member should submit his or her recommendation to the chair. At this time, the chair will send committee recommendations to the students. The chair may request another draft from the student or may schedule a proposal hearing.

### **Proposal Hearing**

The Dissertation Chair presides over the proposal hearing, which may be conducted face-to-face or via videoconference. The chair may invite others to observe (but not participate in) the hearing.

There are three components to the formal proposal hearing:

1. The doctoral candidate presents an overview of the proposal
2. The dissertation committee questions the candidate.
3. The committee convenes privately to make a final decision about the proposal.

Proposal overviews (Step 1 above) are typically supported with electronic slides composed in presentation software. Candidates with successful proposals use the presentation as a visual aid to guide a discussion with the faculty, not as a text document with long passages from the first three chapters. Committee members have four options following a proposal hearing:

- (a) Pass without modifications. The student may immediately continue with the research once it is approved by the IRB.
- (b) Pass with minor modification. The student may work with the chair to submit an IRB proposal and modify the first three dissertation chapters based on feedback from the committee. This revised text should be submitted to the dissertation chair within 15 days.
- (c) Pass with major modifications. The student must make the requested changes based on feedback from the committee before the chair submits the IRB application. It is the responsibility of the dissertation chair to determine when the modified dissertation proposal has adequately addressed the requested changes.
- (d) Fail. The student must make the requested changes before being able to continue with the research. The modified dissertation proposal must be resubmitted to the chair, then reviewed by the committee members, who have 20 days to submit a decision to the dissertation chair. Upon receiving all of the recommendations of the committee, the chair will synthesize them and present a final decision to the student. If necessary, the chair will then work with the student to insure that the modified dissertation proposal meets all of the recommendations of the committee.

Once the proposal is approved via options a, b or c above, the student works with the chair to complete an IRB form. The completed form is submitted by the chair of the dissertation committee to the chair of the IRB.

### **Approval of Dissertation Proposal**

The dissertation proposal will be approved in writing when the chair is satisfied with the revisions made by the student in response to the committee's feedback.

### **Institutional Review Board**

**About the IRB.** The Institutional Review Board (IRB) consists of faculty and qualified staff from William Woods University. This board is responsible to see that all research complies with University and federal guidelines. The Board focuses particularly on the protection of proposed research participants from possible harm.

The IRB reviews all proposed research projects in the Ed.D. program for compliance with ethical standards of human research. IRB approval is required before collection of any dissertation data.

All research conducted by University faculty, staff and students must be reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) prior to the start of the research. The forms, guidelines and procedures for review can be accessed on the [IRB page](#) on the William Woods website. All research projects will be reviewed by the committee a minimum of once per year.

**Research competency requirement.** All researchers must complete a series of modules designed to train and to assess knowledge of protection of human subjects. The IRB chair will verify that the researcher has successfully completed the modules before the IRB application is reviewed. If the researcher has not completed the training, the application will not be considered. This training may be [accessed here](#) and is free to William Woods University faculty, staff, and students.

**Proposal review process.** The IRB chair will notify the principal investigator (dissertation chair) in writing if the IRB has questions or concerns about a research proposal. Notice of an approved proposal will be sent by the IRB chair to the principal investigator and the student in writing. Students should include the IRB approval letter as an appendix in their final dissertation.

### **Research, Data Collection and Analysis**

Following successful passage of the written comprehensive examination, proposal, and IRB approval, students will be allowed to collect and analyze the data. All work should be aligned to the methodology as outlined and detailed in the approved dissertation proposal.

### **Proofing and Editing Chapter Drafts**

The final dissertation must be formatted according to the *William Woods University Doctoral Dissertation Handbook* and *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, (latest edition)*.

The chair sets deadlines for chapter submissions and final draft submission. The chair shall correspond with the student periodically and as needed to keep track of progress and to provide detailed feedback on drafts. The dissertation chair will also, on an as-needed basis, communicate with and update the dissertation committee on the progress of the dissertation research.

Proofreading and editing are the responsibility of the candidate. However, the dissertation chair is available to assist in the process. When requesting that dissertation information be reviewed by the dissertation chair, the student should allow plenty of time for the text review to occur. The chair may alert the candidate about repeated errors



in style and/or grammar without marking every instance of those errors. The candidate may work with online editing companies with approval from his/her dissertation chair.

## **Dissertation Defense**

**About the defense.** The dissertation defense, along with submitting all required documentation, is the culminating experience for the doctoral program before degree conferral. It is a public event (see *Conducting the hearing*, p. X). With the approval of the dissertation chair, students that are on track to submit the final dissertation may present and defend that document before their committee members. If the student does not continue to make satisfactory progress after the defense is scheduled, the chair retains the right to postpone or cancel the defense. Such a right is based on the dissertation chair's responsibility to make every effort to ensure that all students who enter the dissertation defense are prepared to pass the defense.

**Preparing for the hearing.** At the defense, similar to the proposal hearing, candidates present an overview of their work, typically supported with electronic slides created using presentation software. Candidates should remember while preparing for the defense that their committee members are familiar with their text, so it is unnecessary to have slides containing long passages from their five chapters. Candidates with successful proposals use the presentation as a visual aid to guide a discussion with the faculty.

The presentation should accent the study's research findings and a discussion of same – chapters Four and Five. Complete reviews of chapters One and Two are not necessary. From Chapter One, students are welcome to speak briefly about the background of the study (including what interested them in the topic) and the study's statement of the problem and purpose. The Chapter Two review should note works of other researchers that guided the structure of the candidate's research.

When discussing Chapter Three, the candidate confirms that the study was conducted as presented at the proposal hearing. If applicable, response rates to surveys are covered. After the candidate presents their study findings in Chapter Four, the presentation is strengthened by discussing how the findings of the candidate's research compare and contrast with findings of other researchers, whose studies are documented in Chapter Two.

Candidates are encouraged to begin working on their presentation after submitting all five chapters to their chair for the first time. Before scheduling a defense meeting, the chair may ask the candidate to submit their draft presentation for review and suggest revisions.

**Scheduling the hearing.** The dissertation chair is responsible for scheduling the defense hearing. The chair will work with the candidate and the committee members to find a common time to convene. Defense hearings are held on the Fulton campus or at the University's Columbia site. Students are expected to defend their dissertations in person. The Chair of Dissertations may authorize a defense by videoconference in exceptional circumstances. All committee members must attend in person or by

teleconference for the defense to occur.

The following timeline has been developed for the 2018-2019 academic year (see Table 1). It is intended to give the dissertation chair and full committee adequate time for review of the dissertation and preparation for the dissertation defense.

Table 1.

*WWU Dissertation Deadline Dates, 2018-19 Academic Year*

<b>Degree conferral dates</b>			
<b>Fall 2018</b>	<b>Spring 2019</b>	<b>Summer 19</b>	
<b>December 7, 2018</b>	<b>April 26, 2019</b>	<b>August 17, 2019</b>	
October 26	March 15	July 6	Complete dissertation draft submitted to chair
November 9	March 29	July 20	Complete draft sent to dissertation committee
November 20	April 12	August 3	Student submits all edits requested by the chair to draft.
November 20	April 12	August 3	Committee members notify chair whether they believe a defense can be held
December 7	April 26	August 17	Last day to convene dissertation defense and degree conferral date for the semester

*Notes.* Students should submit a draft of their completed dissertation to their chair by the first date in a column if they aspire to have their degree conferred at the end of that semester. Submitting a draft by this date does not guarantee that a defense will be convened that semester. The chair may ask for edits and additional drafts before sending a dissertation to committee members for review.

Dissertation chairs have up to two weeks to review and respond to initial submissions of dissertations. Committee members have up to two weeks to review and respond to the chair after receiving a draft from the dissertation chair.

**Conducting the hearing.** The defense is a public event. Anyone may attend the event; however, only the candidate and dissertation committee members are permitted to speak during the defense. The doctoral candidate must arrive at the defense with two copies of the signature page, to be signed at the end of the defense.

There are three components to the defense:

1. The doctoral candidate presents an overview of the dissertation
2. The dissertation committee questions the candidate.
3. The committee convenes privately to make a final decision about the defense.

Immediately after the private committee meeting, the chair reports the results of the dissertation defense to the student.

There are three potential outcomes:

- (a) pass (with or without minor modifications);
- (b) fail; or
- (c) no consensus reached.

If the candidate passes the defense, the chair oversees the signing of all the copies of the signature pages and returns them to the candidate. If the committee requires any changes to the dissertation before final submission, the chair will submit the change requests to the student in writing within one week of the defense.

If the dissertation committee does not find the defense acceptable, the candidate will be informed and a meeting scheduled with the chair to discuss the next steps. Candidates that do not pass the defense must enroll in EDU 790 Research Seminar in the following term, and each consecutive term, to continue degree candidacy and dissertation advising until the dissertation advisor believes the dissertation is ready to be defended again. At this point, the procedure outlined previously in the “scheduling” section takes effect. The second defense is also the last attempt at passing. Any individual not successfully defending his/her dissertation on the second attempt will be withdrawn from the program.

If the dissertation committee cannot come to an immediate consensus about the outcome of the dissertation defense, the student will be given an incomplete for EDU 781/790. The dissertation committee must come to a consensus within 10 days of dissertation defense. If consensus does not emerge, the dissertation chair, in consultation with the Chair of Doctoral Studies will make the final decision of whether the dissertation passes or fails.

### **Publishing and Archiving the Dissertation**

Candidates who have successfully defended are responsible for providing the chair with a dissertation copy containing any edits requested at the defense hearing. The Chair will check to see that the requested edits have been made, then forward copies of the document to the Chair of the Doctoral Program and to the Chair of Dissertation Studies.

William Woods dissertations are archived through the ProQuest database. Students will receive instructions about this process from the Chair of Dissertation

Studies after the document is approved by the dissertation chair. The archiving process is not part of degree requirements and does not affect the student's degree conferral date.

### **Degree Conferral and Commencement**

**Degree conferral.** The University has three conferral dates per year, one each in May, August and December. Degrees are conferred after successful defense of the dissertation and completion of the Research Seminar (EDU790) section that the student is enrolled in at the time of the defense.

**Commencement.** The University has one commencement ceremony in May. However, candidates may march in the commencement immediately following the date of their successful defense of their dissertation. Candidates must complete the graduation materials online as notification of intent to participate in the May ceremony.

### **Formatting the Dissertation**

The requirements and guidelines listed in this handbook have been developed to comply with current publishing and archiving standards and are consistent with peer institutions. Any formatting concerns not addressed in this handbook should be directed to the candidate's dissertation chair and/or the latest edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*.

### **Organization**

Dissertations should be organized into three sections:

1. Preliminary pages (signature and title pages, abstract, dedication, acknowledgements, table of contents, list of tables, list of figures).
2. Main text (Introduction, Literature Review, Research Methodology, Results, and Summary, Discussions and Conclusions)
3. Supplemental Material (references, appendices, biography).

### **Alignment**

Left justification is required. Justifying the margins may add spaces between words to stretch out a line, leaving awkward gaps in the text.

### **Font and Size**

The preferred font is Times New Roman, 12 pt. This should be used throughout the document, including headings, page numbers, and tables. Students who wish to use a different font or size should consult with their dissertation chair. Fonts and corresponding point sizes approved for WWU dissertations are in Table 2.

Table 2

*Fonts Approved for WWU Dissertations (with Point Sizes)*

Arial	11 point
<b>Georgia</b>	<b>12 point</b>
Times New Roman	12 point
Trebuchet MS	11 point
Verdana	11 point

**Margins**

Every page of the document, including appendixes, must have consistent margins. Margins must be one inch on the top, right, and bottom, and 1.5 inches on the left margin.

**Pagination**

No page number appears on the signature or title pages. The title page is page 1 of the dissertation – the first visible page number is page 2, which will be either the Copyright page (if used) or the Abstract.

**Widows and Orphans**

“Widow” lines occur when the last line of a paragraph appears alone at the top of a page. “Orphan” lines occur when the first line of a paragraph appears alone at the bottom of a page. Most word-processing programs have a feature to prevent or fix this error, but if not, a “widow” or “orphan” line can be fixed by moving a line from the previous page to accompany it or moving the line onto the next page. In these instances, it is acceptable for the bottom margin to be greater than one inch.

**Dissertation Sections****Preliminary Pages**

**Contents and order.** The preliminary pages contain the following, in this order. Each item begins at the top of a separate page created by inserting a page break:

Signature page

Title page

Copyright page (optional)

Abstract

Dedication (optional)

Acknowledgments (optional)

Table of contents

List of tables (if tables appear in document)

List of figures (if figures appear in document)

**Headings.** All pages on the above list, except for the signature and title pages, should have [APA Level 1 headings](#).

**Signature page.** See the dissertation template, available on the EDU781 and EDU790 course pages on OWLnet, for an example. This page, once signed by the committee members after a successful defense, is an official record of the school's acceptance of the dissertation. Therefore, students must have this page formatted as part of their dissertation before they defend and ensure that the correct page is signed at the defense.

The title on this page should match the one on the title page exactly. If the title changes based on committee recommendation after the defense, the student will need to submit revised title and signature pages with the final dissertation submission. The dissertation chair is authorized to sign on behalf of all committee members participating in the dissertation defense who are not present in person (such as present by teleconference).

The signature page should be formatted as follows:

The title should be printed in upper and lower case and double-spaced, centered between left and right margins.

On a new line (double-spaced and centered), the word "by" in lowercase letters should be typed. Some word-processing software will automatically capitalize the first letter of a new line, so students should manually check that both letters are in lowercase.

On a new line (double-spaced and centered), the doctoral candidates full name should be typed as it appears on his or her transcript.

On a new line, six spaces below, double-spaced and centered, the month and year of the dissertation defense should appear, with no comma in between.

On a new line, eight spaces below, left aligned, should be typed with the colon:  
Approved:

Two spaces below that, five signature lines extending from left to right margins should be created, one for each member of the dissertation committee. These lines can be created by holding down the shift and dash keys at the same time.

The first line should begin with the label of "Chair" followed by a colon:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chair: \_

Centered directly below each signature line should appear the name and title of each committee member: Joe Smith, Ed. D.

Each signature line should appear three spaces below the name and title of the preceding committee member.

**Title page.** The title should accurately reflect the content and scope of the dissertation and be punctuated appropriately, using a colon if there is a subtitle. Abbreviations, acronyms, symbols and Greek letters should not be used. If the title changes based on committee recommendation after the defense, the student will be

required to resubmit revised title and signature pages for an additional review before the dean's signature can be obtained.

The title should be printed in Upper and Lower case and double-spaced, centered between left and right margins.

On a new line (double-spaced and centered), the word "by" in lowercase letters should be typed. Some word-processing software will automatically capitalize the first letter of a new line, so students should manually check that both letters are in lowercase.

On a new line (double-spaced and centered), the doctoral candidate's full name should be typed as it appears on his or her transcript.

At the center of the page, the following description should be typed, single-spaced, with the exact wording and line breaks, as shown:

A Dissertation Presented  
to the Faculty  
of William Woods University

On a new line double-spaced type:

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Education

On a new line, type the month and year of the date the degree is conferred should be typed, formatted as follows, with no comma between the month and year:

December 2018

The font and size for all text on the page should be consistent. No page number should appear on the title page.

**Abstract.** The abstract is a succinct summary of the dissertation research and results. It will often be the first point of reference that people have with the dissertation, and is used by researchers to determine the relevance, reliability, and quality of the dissertation for their research. Therefore, the abstract should be clear and concise, yet dense with key words and definitions, making it a self-contained document. If the abstract changes based on committee recommendation after the defense, the student will need to submit the revised abstract with the final dissertation submission. Formatting should follow APA guidelines.

The abstract is written after all five chapters of the dissertation are complete.

**Dedication and Acknowledgments.** The dedication usually contains a personal note to family and friends, while acknowledgments usually extend gratitude to those who provided professional and academic assistance. Both of these pages are optional, but most dissertations contain acknowledgments. The dedication and acknowledgments should be on separate pages. They must maintain a professional tone. These pages must be double-spaced and should not exceed two pages each. Formatting should follow APA guidelines.

**Table of Contents.** The table of contents is compiled by listing the headings in the document pages that follow it; therefore, it should not list headings for any pages preceding it (i.e., abstract, dedication, acknowledgments, etc.). The heading levels that are included should remain consistent; for example, listing the second-level subheadings from the first chapter, requires a listing of the second-level subheadings in all chapters. Each level of subheading should be consistently indented a few spaces more than the preceding level. Students should double-check after any main text revisions that entries in the table of contents match the ones in the text in terms of exact wording and punctuation, and that the respective contents appear on the page numbers listed. The table of contents should be formatted as outlined in the APA guidelines.

**List of Tables, List of Figures.** If the document contains tables and/or figures, lists should be included to help readers to access relevant data. Formatting should follow APA guidelines. Students should double-check after any main text revisions that entries in the lists match the ones in the text in terms of exact wording and punctuation, and that the actual contents appear on the page numbers.

## **Main Text**

**Contents and order.** The main text contains the following, in this order. Each item begins at the top of a separate page created by inserting a page break:

- Chapter One (Introduction)
- Chapter Two (Review of Literature)
- Chapter Three (Research Methods)
- Chapter Four (Results)
- Chapter Five (Discussion and Conclusion)

**Pagination.** Each chapter should begin on a new page with the name (Chapter One, for example) and title (Introduction) presented on separate lines as an [APA Level 1](#) header.

**Headings and subheadings.** Headings and subheadings appear in the same font and size as the rest of the text. However, capitalization, italics, and indentation may be applied in a logical and consistent sequence as specified by APA.

**In-text citations.** All sources for concepts, ideas, quotations, or paraphrased text used in the document must be cited as referenced in the APA guidelines.

**Tables and figures.** Formatting of tables (including borders), table titles, and figure captions, including placement, typeface, alignment, and wording should follow APA style. Candidates may reduce the size of a table or figure by using a smaller size type within the table or figure, to meet the margin requirements, while maintaining readability. The fonts of table titles and figure captions should remain the same size as the regular text, even if the actual tables or figures are reduced.



If the dissertation includes a table or figure that appears in another source, it is the candidate's responsibility to obtain permission from the original author to use the table or figure in the dissertation. Such permissions should be included in the dissertation's Appendix.

## **Supplemental Material**

**Contents and Order.** Supplemental material may consist of the following pages, in this order. Each item begins at the top of a separate page created by inserting a page break::

- References
- Appendices
- Biography (optional)

**References.** Before submitting the final dissertation, candidates should ensure that the information within is accurate and not plagiarized. The reference list should begin on a new page. Candidates should consult the *APA Manual* for specific formatting and organization of their comprehensive list of references. They should verify that each in-text citation is matched with a reference in the reference list and vice-versa (that all references in the reference list are indeed in the dissertation).

**Appendices.** Appendixes generally include material such as questionnaires, raw data, blank informed consent forms, and data collection instruments (with copyright permission). Any IRB approvals and copyright permissions should be included as appendixes. If more than one appendix is used, they should each be labeled with a letter, consecutively beginning with "A." Each appendix should also have a descriptive title. The titles should be listed in the table of contents. A separate cover page should be provided for each appendix with appendix label and descriptive title as the header (See APA Level 1 Header). In-text references to the appendixes should refer to specific appendixes by label (example: see Appendix A for the original survey).

**Biography.** Candidates may include one, single-spaced, paragraph with biographical information as the last page of the document. The biography should not be paginated (or included in a total page count), and should not be listed in the table of contents. It should maintain a professional tone. If the candidate was employed in the same district as some of the study's research participants and the district was intentionally not identified in the research, the district's name should not appear in the biography or in contact information provided the candidate.