

# DOCTORAL STUDIES HANDBOOK

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2025-2026



**DOCTORAL STUDIES HANDBOOK**  
**FRANKLIN UNIVERSITY**  
**2025-2026**

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## MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN OF DOCTORAL STUDIES

Welcome to Franklin University's doctoral programs! I am pleased to present our Doctoral Studies Handbook, meticulously designed to guide you through your doctoral journey. This resource is crafted for our doctoral students, doctoral candidates, and doctoral faculty to use as our learners work toward a significant milestone in their academic and professional development that promises personal and scholarly growth.

To our students and candidates at Franklin University, we are committed to academic excellence. By the end of your journey, you will become a scholar-practitioner, contributing to your field of study and our growing research culture. Your path is rigorous and demanding, yet profoundly rewarding, tailored to expand your thinking, research abilities, and practical skills.

As a future scholar-practitioner, you are expected to uphold the highest academic integrity and ethical standards. Our programs emphasize the importance of original and thoughtful research and the responsibility to conduct it ethically.

In this handbook, you will find various resources to support your success. This includes assistance from dedicated faculty advisors, administrative advisors, library services, your dissertation committee, the Office of Academic Scholarship, and the Doctoral Student Association – all here to guide you toward your academic goals. Our policies, requirements, code of conduct, and doctoral candidacy details are here. There also is information about your role as a student or doctoral candidate, as well as the roles and responsibilities of your committee members. This handbook is revised annually to reflect current policies and practices.

Remember, your journey is about personal growth as much as it is about academic achievement. On behalf of the Doctoral Studies administrative and academic staff, I extend my

best wishes to each of you in your scholarly endeavors at Franklin University. Welcome to a journey of discovery, challenge, and achievement.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Wendell Seaborne". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'W'.

Dr. Wendell Seaborne  
Dean, Doctoral Studies & Academic Research  
2025 – 2026 Academic Year

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Doctoral Studies Handbook is a guide for all doctoral students, doctoral candidates, doctoral staff, and doctoral faculty to use and follow as they navigate programs within Franklin University Doctoral Studies. Please refer to the handbook for key information on Doctoral Studies policies and processes. The handbook is reviewed and updated annually. This version is current for the 2025-2026 academic year.

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

Franklin University is a student-centered, non-profit, independent institution. Since 1902, the University has been a pioneer in meeting the needs of adult students who have the ambition to continue their education in combination with other responsibilities. Franklin provides high quality, relevant education, enabling the broadest possible community of learners to achieve their goals and enrich the world.

## **INSTITUTIONAL LEARNING OUTCOMES**

**Communication:** Communicate professionally using a variety of modalities (written, spoken, and analytical).

**Critical Thinking:** Analyze and evaluate information to make reasoned arguments and solve problems.

**Civic and Global Engagement:** Integrate knowledge and skills to engage with and respond to social, environmental, and economic challenges at local, national, and global levels.

**Ethics:** Analyze and evaluate complex issues and situations to make informed ethical decisions.

## **DOCTORAL DEGREES AND PROGRAM OUTCOMES**

### **Doctor of Business Administration (DBA)**

1. Demonstrate doctoral-level communication competencies.
2. Implement ethical business practices.
3. Explain theoretical foundations for effective business leadership.

4. Demonstrate scholarly research skills by contributing to the professional body of knowledge for effective business.

#### **Doctor of Healthcare Administration (DHA)**

1. Apply research skills to prioritize and plan organizational healthcare change.
2. Analyze organizational healthcare problems, develop solutions, and measure their impact.
3. Demonstrate ethical leadership and management theory in a healthcare organization.
4. Integrate considerations of legal and regulatory requirements for healthcare into decision-making for organizational changes.

#### **Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP)**

1. Apply evidence-based findings to improve clinical practice and healthcare delivery systems.
2. Analyze and evaluate the local and global aspects of a healthcare organization's structure, functions, and resources.
3. Strategically lead improvements in health outcomes, quality, safety, and policy.
4. Develop interprofessional teams that promote quality care, reduce risk, and improve complex healthcare delivery systems.
5. Integrate data from information systems and technology to support clinical decision-making for clinical prevention and population health.

Note that the DNP uses its own handbook. Use this link to access the latest version:

<https://www.franklin.edu/documents-forms/nursing>

#### **Doctor of Education in Instructional Design Leadership (EdD-IDL)**

1. Analyze organizations to determine learning and performance improvement needs.
2. Strategize and implement solutions to complex learning problems.
3. Demonstrate leadership and management in a learning organization.

4. Design and develop advanced curricula and instructional products.
5. Evaluate training and learning at a systems level.
6. Conduct and synthesize applied research: formulate a research problem; integrate previous literature into an appropriate literature review; design a research study; analyze and interpret data; summarize and present research results; and discuss research results.

#### **Doctor of Professional Studies in Instructional Design Leadership (DPS – IDL)**

1. Analyze organizations to determine learning and performance improvement needs.
2. Strategize and implement solutions to complex learning problems.
3. Demonstrate leadership and management in a learning organization.
4. Design and develop advanced curricula and instructional products.
5. Evaluate training and learning at a systems level.
6. Synthesize knowledge from several fields and disciplines.
7. Conduct and synthesize applied research: formulate a research problem; integrate previous literature into an appropriate literature review; design a research study; analyze and interpret data; summarize and present research results; and discuss research results.

#### **Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership (EdD-OL)**

1. Apply leadership and management theory in an organizational context.
2. Demonstrate ethical leadership and management in an organization.
3. Evaluate data to prioritize and plan organizational change.
4. Respond to industry legal and regulatory requirements impacting an organization.
5. Analyze organizations to determine leadership, learning, and performance needs.
6. Apply research skills to analyze organizational problems, develop solutions, and measure their impact.

*Franklin University grants doctoral degrees to students enrolled in our programs. A doctoral degree is an applied professional degree and not a Doctorate in Philosophy (PhD).*

## **STUDENT SERVICES AND SUPPORT**

Franklin University is committed to students' success. Administrative and academic support services are available to students and candidates throughout the doctoral journey. Each student is paired with a graduate academic advisor (GRAA), who helps throughout the doctoral process on aspects such as enrollment and understanding policies. Each student will also have the support of their program's doctoral faculty advisor (DFA) from the beginning of coursework. Additionally, two Doctoral Studies coordinators provide focused guidance by supporting and coordinating students and candidates. Other opportunities for support are available through the library, the Doctoral Student Association (DSA), and the Office of Academic Scholarship (OAS).

### **Graduate Academic Advisor (GRAA)**

All new doctoral students will be assigned a graduate academic advisor (GRAA) by the admissions team as they are registered for their first course at Franklin University. Each doctoral student will remain on GRAA active rosters until they graduate or are not enrolled for four (4) consecutive semesters. Academic advisors provide administrative support and resources for doctoral learners, in addition to the support provided by the doctoral faculty advisor and post-candidacy dissertation committee chair and committee members.

*Key responsibilities of the GRAA include:*

- Assist with course registration.
- Understand and convey degree requirements.
- Set expectations relating to Franklin University policies, such as attendance, grading, and New Student Orientation.
- Understand and facilitate administrative processes.

- Understand and explain Franklin University's calendar, including important dates and deadlines.
- Provide access (and referrals) to university resources or offices when appropriate.
- Liaise with faculty advisors and dissertation committee chairs/members, as needed.
- Provide support, advocacy, and encouragement throughout the student's academic career, including career advising.

### **Program Doctoral Faculty Advisor(s) (DFA)**

Each doctoral program has one (1) doctoral faculty advisor (DFA) to serve their students. From the beginning of coursework, students are assigned to the DFA in their program. This is the faculty who supports students and answers their questions about the program and dissertation journey. The DFAs of each program will organize 1-2 workshops every semester, allowing for opportunities to communicate program updates and answer any questions from students. One workshop focuses on students early in the coursework and the other on students getting closer to candidacy.

Current qualifications and credentials for DFA service are:

- Successful completion of INST 585, which includes current CITI certification.
- DFAs need at least one (1) year of experience since conferral of their doctorate to serve a program.

*Key responsibilities of each Program DFA include:*

- Respond to students' questions throughout the coursework stage.
- Organize and run 1-2 workshops per semester:
  - One workshop is exclusively for new(er) students.
  - One workshop is exclusively for students approaching candidacy.
- Communicate program updates and expectations, and encourage students to participate in Doctoral Studies and university-wide activities.

- Inform students about the support services available and other helpful activities at Franklin University.
- Inform students about Doctoral Studies processes and policies as well as provide clear guidelines about committee formation, comprehensive exam, and expectations of candidacy.

### **Doctoral Studies Coordinator for Coursework**

The Doctoral Studies Coordinator for Coursework serves as a key administrative and academic liaison for doctoral students during the coursework phase of their program. This individual not only provides expert guidance to students on program requirements, timelines, and procedures, but also actively contributes to the strategic development and continuous improvement of the doctoral student experience. Working collaboratively with program chairs, faculty, and administrative offices, the coordinator helps ensure policy alignment, communication clarity, and seamless support across departments. They take a proactive role in identifying trends, barriers, and opportunities in the coursework stage and using data-informed insights to recommend enhancements to curriculum planning, advising practices, and student services.

*In addition to serving as a central point of contact for student inquiries and procedural navigation, the coordinator contributes to:*

- Onboarding and training of new faculty and advisors on coursework-phase processes.
- Development and refinement of program documentation, student-facing guides, and communication materials.
- Coordination of academic interventions and success plans for students at risk of falling behind or entering probation.
- Participation in committees or task forces related to doctoral education, academic policy, or student success.

## **Doctoral Studies Coordinator for Candidacy**

The Doctoral Studies Coordinator for Candidacy serves as the primary administrative and academic liaison for students as they transition into and progress through doctoral candidacy. This individual plays a central role in ensuring that all candidacy-related milestones are completed in alignment with program requirements and institutional policies. The Coordinator supports both students and faculty throughout the candidacy phase and provides continuity from comprehensive exam preparation through dissertation completion.

### *Key responsibilities include:*

- Assists students in forming dissertation committees prior to enrolling in the comprehensive examination.
- Provides assistance for registration into doctoral candidacy courses, including DISS 9100 (Dissertation) and DISS 9400 (Dissertation Defense).
- Serves as the first point of contact for any issues that arise during candidacy, including, but not limited to, committee membership changes and student progress concerns.
- Manages the scheduling of dissertation proposal presentations and final defenses, coordinating availability across committee members and institutional calendars.
- Monitors post-defense tasks to ensure successful completion of all requirements, including submission of final forms, manuscript formatting, and publishing.

The Coordinator provides consistent and informed support to students, helping them navigate the administrative and procedural elements of doctoral candidacy. Their role is critical in fostering academic momentum and ensuring compliance with all institutional policies, thereby supporting timely and successful degree completion.

## **Library Support**

The Franklin University Learning Commons offers tutoring, workshops, and structured learning assistance. In addition to database research support and interlibrary loan services, the library offers a writing support system that allows students to submit their papers and receive helpful

feedback on their writing. This process identifies key issues in writing expertise and helps students improve the quality of their work. *Students may not be able to utilize Learning Commons support (tutoring) during their comprehensive exam.*

Here is a direct link to resources provided by the Learning Commons:

<https://www.franklin.edu/learning-commons/tutoring-workshops>

### **Doctoral Student Association (DSA)**

The Doctoral Student Association (DSA) is a student-led and faculty-supported association within Franklin University Doctoral Studies. It is open to all enrolled doctoral students and candidates. It offers the opportunity for students to socialize, network, and get to know peers and faculty. It is also a hub to express concerns, share achievements, and network throughout the doctoral journey. The association runs several activities throughout the year: formal meetings, Q&A sessions with invited guests, independent smaller groups, and an annual conference.

Use this email to reach out directly to the Doctoral Student Association: [dsa@franklin.edu](mailto:dsa@franklin.edu)

### **Office of Academic Scholarship**

The Office of Academic Scholarship (OAS) fosters a culture of scholarly inquiry at Franklin University, providing services to all doctoral students/candidates, faculty, and staff. The OAS publishes a quarterly newsletter and offers programs and initiatives throughout the year to support the growing body of scholarly activities at Franklin. The OAS website provides a resources page that is especially helpful to doctoral students and candidates. There you will find the current Doctoral Studies Handbook, tips on conducting research, dissertation and proposal templates, and an extensive video library.

The OAS website can be found here: [www.franklin.edu/oas](http://www.franklin.edu/oas)

## COURSEWORK LAYOUT

### **Pre-Fall 2024 Program Enrollment – DBA, DHA, DPS-IDL, and EdD-OL**

The DBA, DHA, DPS-IDL, and EdD-OL programs are organized similarly. Students that began before Fall 2024 complete 20 credit hours in the major discipline, 16 credit hours of research core, and 12 credit hours of electives.

Following the successful completion of coursework, students are required to take at least ten (10) additional credit hours to complete their doctorate degree. These include:

- DISS 9000 Comprehensive Exam – one (1) credit hour
- DISS 9100 Dissertation – minimum of eight (8) credit hours
- DISS 9400 Dissertation Defense – one (1) credit hour

### **Fall 2024 and Beyond Program Enrollment – DBA, DHA, DPS-IDL, EdD-IDL, and EdD-OL**

The DBA, DHA, DPS-IDL, EdD-IDL, and EdD-OL programs are organized similarly. Students that began in Fall 2024 and after complete 16 credit hours in the major discipline, 16 credit hours of electives, and 20 credit hours in the research area. *For the EdD-IDL and EdD-OL programs only, eight (8) of the 16 elective hours must be in a focus area and the other eight (8) credits are pure electives.*

**Note:** The DPS-IDL degree was offered to incoming students for the last time in Fall 2024. From Spring 2025, students who pursue a doctoral degree in instructional design leadership enroll in the EdD-IDL program.

Following the successful completion of coursework, students are required to take at least eight (8) additional credit hours to complete their doctorate degree. These include:

- DISS 9000 Comprehensive Exam – one (1) credit hour
- DISS 9100 Dissertation – minimum of six (6) credit hours
- DISS 9400 Dissertation Defense – one (1) credit hour

Descriptions of all the courses offered are found at <https://www.franklin.edu/degrees/doctoral>.

### **Expectations During Coursework**

Franklin University expects all doctoral students to uphold quality and integrity during their coursework, such as through collaborations with peers, showing respect for one another, and contributing to an inclusive atmosphere. Our student community standards include:

- Honesty and integrity
- Respect for others
- Respect for the campus community

*NOTE: There should be no expectation that faculty will regrade assignments during coursework, allow for resubmissions, or provide templates of the assignments. Some instructors may choose to make an exception, but all faculty are discouraged from making these exceptions.*

### **Academic Misconduct**

Forms of academic misconduct include, but are not limited to:

#### *Plagiarism*

The submission of another's work, in part or in whole, as one's own for credit without sufficient citation or credit.

#### *Recycling Assignments*

The resubmission of one's own work, in part or in whole, which was previously submitted for credit in an earlier section, course, or program, without prior permission from the course instructor.

#### *Facilitation of Academic Misconduct*

The willful enabling of others to commit an act of academic misconduct, such as sharing assignments to be plagiarized, completing an assignment for another student, or taking an exam under a false identity.

### *Fabrication*

The unauthorized falsification or invention of false information, citations, or data in any academic research, assignment, or examination.

*NOTE: Any unauthorized use of A.I. tools and similar software such as ChatGPT, Grammarly GO, Google Bard, and so on is considered an act of plagiarism and is not permitted in course assignments at Franklin. Unless the course instructor has explicitly granted permission to use A.I. tools to complete a given assignment, students should refrain from using such tools and rely on course textbooks and approved online sources to assist them in completing their assignments. Failure to do so may result in a formal report of suspected academic misconduct and possible sanctions.*

## **Academic Misconduct Violations and Outcomes**

### *Level 1 Violations*

These are acts committed by the learner that cause a limited negative impact toward the learning process. Level 1 Violations are reviewed by the instructor of the course and the Office of Community Standards and may result in a sanction spanning a reduction in points up to no credit on the assignment.

Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Submitting assignments that contain incomplete or incorrect citations within otherwise correctly cited work.

- Turning in work that yields a likelihood of plagiarism or AI-generated content based on university-approved plagiarism and AI detection tools, accompanied by credible contextual indicators (e.g., inconsistent writing style or past concerns).
- Resubmitting limited portions of previously submitted work without receiving instructor approval.

For Level 1 Violations, it is the University's expectation that course instructors communicate directly with their students to address the concern before submitting a formal report of academic misconduct. Whenever appropriate, faculty should make a reasonable attempt to resolve the issue through educational dialogue and clarification. If, after this conversation, the concern remains unresolved or warrants formal review, the faculty member should submit a report to the Office of Community Standards. If, after the discussion, the instructor determines that a Level 1 Violation has occurred, the instructor is expected to file an academic integrity report documenting the violation and noting that a discussion took place.

### *Level 2 Violations*

These are intentional acts committed by the learner that cause a direct negative impact toward the learning process. The first Level 2 Violation is reviewed by the Office of Community Standards and the faculty member that submitted the report and will result in a sanction spanning a zero grade on the assignment up to a failing grade in the class. A second Level 2 Violation in a subsequent class or subsequent section of a class already taken is reviewed and adjudicated by the Academic Honor Board and will result in a sanction spanning a zero grade in the class up to disciplinary dismissal from the University.

Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Committing repeated Level 1 Violations or a second violation within Doctoral Studies.
- Submitting work that reflects an increased likelihood of plagiarism or AI-generated content as indicated by university-approved detection tools.

- Plagiarizing content beyond traditional written text, including but not limited to images, computer code, data visualizations, diagrams, animations, videos, music, and other forms of non-natural language expression.
- Reusing substantial portions of previously submitted work in new assignments without permission from the instructor.
- Providing unauthorized help to another student that enables them to commit academic misconduct (facilitating academic misconduct).

### *Level 3 Violations*

These are intentional acts committed by the learner that cause a direct and disruptive impact toward the learning process. Level 3 Violations are reviewed by the Academic Honor Board and will result in sanctions spanning a failing grade in the class up to disciplinary dismissal from the University.

Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Committing repeated Level 1 and/or Level 2 Violations, including a second violation at any level within Doctoral Studies.
- Arranging for another individual or service to complete academic work on one's behalf and submitting it as one's own (contract cheating).
- Violating exam rules or guidelines in any format of an exam-based assignment (in-person, online, proctored, or comprehensive).
- Enabling another student to commit academic misconduct by providing them with substantial portions of coursework or exam content (facilitating academic misconduct).
- Fabricating or falsifying data, citations, or other information in academic submissions.
- Committing any form of academic misconduct on a culminating program experience such as a capstone project, thesis, dissertation, or comprehensive exam.

Additional information on the Franklin University Student Code of Conduct can be found at

<https://www.franklin.edu/about-us/policy-information/student-code-of-conduct>.

### **Dismissal Policies During Coursework**

Doctoral students are expected to maintain a minimum cumulative grade point average (GPA) of 3.0 throughout their program of study, and students must have a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.0 to graduate.

While in Doctoral Studies, students are permitted to earn one grade of “C” (this includes a “C+”, “C”, or “C-”). If a doctoral student’s cumulative GPA falls below 3.0 at the end of a trimester, the student will be placed on probation and may be scheduled for academic counseling.

After being placed on probation, the student may attempt up to eight (8) hours of coursework to return their overall cumulative GPA to 3.0. Students can achieve this in one of the following ways:

- Retake a course to restore their GPA to 3.0.
- Earn a sufficient number of higher grades to restore their GPA to 3.0. Coursework used to raise the GPA must be part of the normal degree requirements.

Any student who fails to attain a cumulative GPA of 3.0 within one grading period of enrollment following academic probation will be subjected to academic dismissal. Once dismissed, students may appeal by following the Readmission procedure to re-enroll in the same program from which they were dismissed. Academically dismissed graduate students seeking reinstatement to Franklin University in another graduate program may also submit an appeal by following the Readmission procedure.

### **ADVANCING TO DOCTORAL CANDIDACY**

Advancing to doctoral candidacy includes two milestones: (1) creating a dissertation committee and (2) passing the comprehensive exam. A student needs to have the full committee formed before being eligible to take the comprehensive exam. Passing the comprehensive exam

changes a student’s status from a doctoral student to a doctoral candidate. These two milestones are crucial for a successful dissertation journey.

### **Education Credentials for Candidates and Graduates**

At Franklin University, we award six (6) doctoral degrees. These are:

<b>Degree</b>	<b>Abbreviation</b>
Doctor of Business Administration	DBA
Doctor of Healthcare Administration	DHA
Doctor of Professional Studies in Instructional Design Leadership	DPS – IDL
Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership	EdD – OL
Doctor of Education in Instructional Design Leadership	EdD – IDL
Doctor of Nursing Practice	DNP

When listing these degrees in any setting, use the appropriate abbreviation. For example, abbreviations such as DrBA or DrHA are not acceptable and should be avoided.

After a student successfully completes their comprehensive exam, they become a doctoral candidate and are considered ABD, which stands for All But Dissertation. This means that you have finished everything in a doctoral program except for the dissertation. Someone who is ABD has successfully completed all required coursework and any required comprehensive exams. The term itself has no academic standing but is used to tell others where you are in your program. There is no such thing as a “DHA ABD degree” or “DBAc”. The APA has expressed concern that the general public may not know what the term means and believe that the holder has completed her/his doctorate. Similarly, the term “ABD Degree” makes claim to a degree that was never completed.

Neither “DHA ABD” nor “DBAc” nor any other acronym represents the achievement of a degree, so the use of either in a formal setting, such as on your Curriculum Vitae (CV) or in correspondence, should be avoided. “DHA ABD” should not be listed on a resume or CV if one

does not intend to continue the program. However, the years of schooling leading to that point should absolutely be included on a resume or CV. An employer will still be impressed with the years of experience, so include this in the education section.

When including doctoral experience on a resume or CV after you have left the program, include the school's name and location in the education section. Since this is likely the most recent educational experience, it should be listed at the top of the section. List the dates of attendance using the month and year format, as well as the degree subject. Do not include the degree type (e.g., DHA), because the degree is unfinished.

### **Dissertation Committee**

Candidates work with a dissertation committee, which includes the dissertation committee chair, a methodologist, and a reviewer. Dissertation committee members work under the guidance of the dissertation committee chair and typically assist in advising the candidate in the dissertation literature review, developing study methods and parameters, analyzing data, writing the dissertation report, and preparing to defend the dissertation. The candidate will work primarily with the dissertation committee chair and the methodologist. The committee chair leads the faculty dissertation committee.

It is intended that the assignment of candidate and dissertation chair will be a mutually productive and rewarding relationship. The doctoral program should be a positive learning experience for the candidate, as well as a positive professional growth experience for both the candidate and his/her dissertation committee chair. Candidates and faculty are expected to make every effort to ensure that the working relationship between candidate and dissertation committee chair—and among all candidates and faculty—meets these expectations.

## Selecting a Dissertation Chair

Doctoral candidates are encouraged to own their dissertation process and be responsible for excelling in coursework, leading the committee formation, and undertaking the dissertation journey.

To form a dissertation committee, students should adhere to the following guidelines:

- Students are responsible for selecting their dissertation committee chair.
- It is encouraged that students start this process early but also take time to make a solid decision. Remember that this is perhaps one of the most impactful decisions you make during the doctoral journey.
- Students can use Franklin University's Establishing Your Committee website (<https://www.franklin.edu/committee-listing>) to review faculty profiles.
- Students are strongly encouraged to reach out to faculty who might be a good fit and have a conversation with them before asking for their service. A cold request via email may result in rejections.
- In special circumstances, students can select faculty from other disciplines, but still need to adhere to their program outcomes.
- Once the student has secured a committee chair, the student will send **one (1) email** to [dissertations@franklin.edu](mailto:dissertations@franklin.edu) that includes:
  - acceptance email from the committee chair; and
  - a brief description of the research topic, including the methodological approach.

This email needs to be sent to [dissertations@franklin.edu](mailto:dissertations@franklin.edu) at least **four (4) weeks before the comprehensive exam date and no earlier than 180 days before the comprehensive exam date**. If this email is not received within the deadline, the student's comprehensive exam will be postponed to the following offering.

Students will be assigned a methodologist and a reviewer by Doctoral Studies. The committee will be complete within one week from receipt of the email to [dissertations@franklin.edu](mailto:dissertations@franklin.edu).

### **PROCESS CHANGE ON DISSERTATION COMMITTEE CHANGES**

This process change outlines the permitted timeframe and conditions under which doctoral candidates may request changes to their dissertation committee. Doctoral candidates may request a change to their dissertation committee members only one (1) time during their candidacy. There are two (2) windows available to request such a change:

- Within 30 days following successful completion of the Comprehensive Exam.
- Within 30 days following the Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval of their research study.

Requests made outside of these periods will not be granted unless one or more of the extraordinary circumstances outlined below is clearly documented and approved by the Program Chair and/or Director of Candidacy.

#### **Extraordinary Circumstances Allowing Committee Changes**

Outside of the standard timeframes, changes to committee membership may be considered only if one or more of the following applies:

- Faculty-initiated withdrawal
  - The current chair, methodologist, or reviewer voluntarily removes themselves or otherwise indicates they are unable or unwilling to continue working with the candidate.
- Neglect of duties
  - The committee member has failed to provide substantive feedback or respond to the candidate's communications for a period of 30 consecutive days without prior explanation or agreed-upon delay.

- Change of methodology or design that the current committee member cannot support.
- Candidate taking a leave of absence.
- Other extraordinary circumstances
  - Exceptions may be considered only in cases where the candidate’s academic progress is demonstrably impeded by circumstances beyond their control, such as substantiated committee chair/member misconduct, documented conflict of interest, extended faculty leave, or verified professional conflict that materially disrupts committee function. All claims must be supported by written documentation and are subject to review and approval on a case-by-case basis by the Program Chair and/or Director of Candidacy. Exceptions will not be granted for interpersonal disagreements or general dissatisfaction.

### **Procedures for Requesting a Committee Change**

The doctoral candidate must submit a written request using the Committee Change Request Form (attached at the appendix) that includes:

- The name of the committee member to be replaced
- The reason for the change request
- Documentation supporting the claim (e.g., lack of feedback, emails, or faculty correspondence)
- A proposed replacement, if applicable

All change requests will be reviewed by the Program Chair and/or Director of Candidacy.

### *The Role of Committee Chair*

The committee chair is at the core of a candidate’s dissertation committee. This faculty works closely with the candidate on the research study and oversees all aspects of the dissertation. During candidacy, the committee chair is responsible for directing the candidate’s expectations and performance. This faculty reviews and provides timely feedback on every single part of the

dissertation before it is passed to the other committee members. The chair frequently engages the methodologist to work with the candidate from the beginning, during the design stage.

The chair also coordinates the feedback between the committee members and the candidate throughout the dissertation. This faculty is the primary contact for anything that arises during the candidacy stage and is expected to meet with the candidate frequently throughout the dissertation work. The recommended touch-base of the committee chair and the candidate is every two weeks or as needed. The chair is responsible for entering the DISS 9100 grades in a timely manner. Failure to enter candidates' grades for DISS 9100 may result in being removed from a candidate's committee.

The committee chair is the co-PI (principal investigator) of a candidate's dissertation research. The chair is responsible for reading and reviewing the candidate's entire IRB protocol before certifying it in Cayuse and sending it to the IRB for review. Failure to do so can result in the removal of the chair from the candidate's committee.

The chair and the candidate jointly discuss graduation deadlines and the defense. Deadlines are sent out to candidates and faculty every semester. More information about the defense and graduation can be found at <https://www.franklin.edu/current-students/academic-resources/graduation-information>.

The chair creates a Zoom link on DISS 9100 for the defense and is responsible for moderating the dissertation defense. Defense moderation guidelines are sent to chairs prior to the scheduled defense date.

### *The Role of Methodologist*

The methodologist is a critically important position on the dissertation committee. This faculty is engaged early in the process to work with the candidate during the research proposal stage as the study design takes shape. The methodologist is the main support during data collection

and data analysis to ensure that all steps are followed correctly, and that the candidate is set up for a successful research project. At times, the methodologists take a more active role while working with the candidate to make sure the design of the study is sound and feasible.

### *The Role of Reviewer*

The faculty reviewer is the third member of the dissertation committee and is assigned to the committee by Doctoral Studies. This faculty member bears the responsibility to be critical of the entire work, raise sound questions about the study, and ensure that the candidate is well-rounded in the fundamentals of the specific topic. The reviewer ensures that the program outcomes are met in the study. This committee member is engaged **twice** in the entire dissertation journey: (1) after the proposal is approved by the chair and methodologist; and (2) after the full dissertation draft is approved by the chair and methodologist. The reviewer is also required to be present at the proposal presentation and final defense.

## **COMPREHENSIVE EXAM**

The comprehensive exam is the threshold for doctoral students as they transition to doctoral candidacy. The comprehensive exam is designed to assess student preparation for their dissertation work through their written analyses, syntheses, integration, and interpretations of the exam question prompts. Students are expected to perform at the doctoral candidacy level to pass the comprehensive exam. Responses to the comprehensive exam question should communicate complex ideas with clarity and be grounded in a strong command of scholarly work in the field. Responses should demonstrate expertise in writing quality, research integrity and ethics, and discipline-specific knowledge. Students are provided feedback to help them move forward with their dissertation work.

The comprehensive exam question largely focuses on three major areas: discipline knowledge and its applications; research design and ethics; and the analysis and synthesis of relevant peer-reviewed and gray literature. The question will be posted in the Canvas shell by the lead faculty

no later than one week before the comprehensive exam is due. Students have at least seven (7) days to complete their exam. The answer is drafted as a Word document that students upload to Canvas for each grader. The comprehensive exam course is three (3) weeks long.

There are two assigned faculty in each program who grade all comprehensive exams submitted by students in their respective program. These graders may rotate or change each semester. One faculty will be a discipline expert and is assigned by the program chair. The other faculty grader will be a methodologist and is assigned by the lead faculty of the comprehensive exam course. The methodologist grader will be the same for all the exams in a given semester.

### **Comprehensive Exam Policy**

Doctoral students who have started their comprehensive examination are expected to show evidence of successful progress in their examination and must maintain acceptable DISS 9000 enrollment. Students must officially withdraw from DISS 9000 prior to the start of the exam or they will be considered enrolled in the exam attempt.

Students pass the comprehensive examination by receiving an overall score of Satisfactory (S) on their assigned question within their allotted attempts. Students are assigned a new question for each attempt. No prior responses are credited in the second or third attempt. Doctoral students must pass the comprehensive exam to matriculate to doctoral candidacy.

For those students that do not pass the comprehensive exam during their first attempt, they are required to pay tuition to enroll in the DISS 9000 course again. Students may take their second attempt in the same term or during a future DISS 9000 course no later than the following term. Students who fail their second attempt at the comprehensive exam may submit an appeal for a third attempt no later than the following term after their second attempt.

For those students who appeal and are approved for a third attempt, they must retake their third attempt no later than the term following the rendered approval. Students are required to pay tuition to enroll in the DISS 9000 course for their third attempt, if granted. Any student who does not successfully pass their assigned question(s) in their third attempt will be dismissed from doctoral studies at Franklin University.

### **Doctoral Suspension During Comprehensive Exam**

A doctoral student in the comprehensive examination phase may be suspended under the following conditions:

- Failure to maintain acceptable DISS 9000 enrollment.
- Conduct issues or academic integrity violations, as outlined in the university code of conduct policy.

### **Doctoral Dismissal During the Comprehensive Exam**

Following an earlier suspension, or directly for certain infractions, a doctoral student in the comprehensive exam phase may be dismissed from Franklin University Doctoral Studies for any of the reasons below:

- Failing the comprehensive examination two times, or failing the examination three times when a third attempt was granted through appeal.
- Failure to maintain adequate academic status or progress, following an earlier suspension and readmission.
- Failure to maintain acceptable DISS 9000 enrollment, including enrollment deadlines, following an earlier suspension and readmission.
- Conduct issues or academic integrity violations, as outlined in the university code of conduct policy.

Dismissed students and candidates will not be considered for admission to any Franklin University doctoral program.

## DOCTORAL CANDIDATE ENROLLMENT

### DISS 9100

All candidates take the DISS 9100 course repeatedly during the candidacy stage. DISS 9100 is a pass/fail course. The committee chair makes the decision of passing or failing a candidate in each term based on their progress. *If the candidate is producing poor quality or unacceptable work, or they are not working toward the dissertation, the committee chair will likely assign a failing grade for that semester.*

A passing grade in DISS 9100 assumes one of the following:

- The candidate is working toward the dissertation and the entire committee has reviewed and accepted parts of the written work.
- The candidate is working toward the dissertation by collecting or analyzing data and the committee chair is aware of the progress.
- The candidate is working toward the dissertation, but the committee members may not have received any parts of the work; however, the committee chair is aware of the progress the candidate is making.

A failing grade in DISS 9100 assumes one of the following:

- The candidate has lost contact with the committee chair and the committee members during the entire semester.
- The candidate has produced sporadic, poor, or unacceptable work during the semester.

A candidate who fails DISS 9100 for two consecutive terms may be suspended from the doctoral program.

***There is no Incomplete grade for DISS 9100. An Incomplete grade is a temporary mark that is assigned only when the committee chair fails to enter a grade for the candidate. It is the responsibility of the chair to enter grades every semester. Failure to do so may result in the removal of the chair from that candidate's committee.***

DISS 9100 is designed with an understanding that candidates will use it as a helpful tool for the resources it provides; *however, DISS 9100 is NOT to be followed blindly*. Every dissertation is unique, and every research or practical study has its specific elements. Some modules in DISS 9100 are more useful to some candidates while others may dismiss them. The course provides a broad source of information that attempts to include all types of resources any candidate may need during their candidacy. Doctoral candidates and their chairs work together to select what applies to a specific research or practical study.

Doctoral candidates are required to submit the following items into DISS 9100:

- The fully approved version of the research proposal;
- The Zoom recording of the proposal presentation;
- All collected data, whether qualitative or quantitative; and
  - As the data collected during the dissertation is the property of Franklin University, de-identified raw data (such as interview recordings, surveys, focus groups, or documents) must be submitted into DISS 9100. Franklin University preserves the right to re-use these raw data for further research.
- The fully approved draft of the complete dissertation.

The candidacy stage differs from candidate to candidate. The candidate and their chair discuss the layout of the dissertation and what parts are written in what order. This is often a personal preference; however, all candidates *must write a research proposal* that is approved by their entire committee before conducting a formal proposal presentation. The proposal presentation is intended to give a candidate the opportunity to showcase their proposed study to their committee and to a larger audience. The committee and the audience may make suggestions for improvement or offer new ideas. After the proposal presentation, the candidate addresses the feedback they received during the presentation through completion of D-1 form, submits any modifications to the committee for approval, and prepares for submission to the Institutional Review Board (IRB).

A candidate enrolls in the same DISS 9100 course each semester until they are ready to defend their dissertation. At that point, they will enroll in the DISS 9400 dissertation defense course.

For DISS 9100, candidates have the option to register for one (1) to four (4) credit hours per term. Candidates who require financial aid need to register for a minimum of two (2) credit hours per term, but candidates paying out of pocket can register for a minimum of one (1) credit hour per term. Doctoral candidates need to complete, with a passing grade, a minimum of eight (8) credit hours pre-Fall 2024 and six (6) credit hours Fall 2024 and beyond before they can defend their dissertation.

*It is the responsibility of the candidate to apply for graduation by the deadlines stated on Franklin's website. Please refer to [Get Prepared for Commencement](#) for more information. If you fail to graduate in the trimester for which you apply, you must complete a new application for any subsequent trimester, including required fees.*

### **DISS 9400**

Once the entire dissertation is approved by each committee member, the candidate will enroll in DISS 9400, the Dissertation Defense course. During this six-week course, the candidate defends the dissertation to the public and publishes the dissertation. The candidate and the committee select a date and time that is available to the candidate and all committee members for the defense and then notify the Doctoral Studies Coordinator, who checks the availability of the program chair on the same date and time. The Zoom link is created by the committee chair in DISS 9100, or outside of DISS 9100 if the candidate is not registered in the course during the defense term. This link is copied into the doctoral defense scheduling form. Dissertation defenses are moderated by the committee chair and follow a format that starts with the candidate's presentation to be followed by questions from the committee and the public audience.

Please note that to schedule a dissertation defense, a full draft of the dissertation needs to be approved by the entire committee and uploaded with the request. The link to schedule a defense is here: <https://forms.office.com/r/OLUiF4zfdP>.

### **Defense Outcomes**

All committee members need to agree on the defense decision. This decision is unanimous. There are four possible outcomes from the oral dissertation defense. *It is important to note that dissertations **rarely** pass without changes following the defense.*

1. Pass with no edits to the written dissertation
  - a. For the oral defense to be approved in this manner, all substantive questions and/or issues raised during the oral defense must already be addressed in the written dissertation. In the event a new question and/or issue is raised and the written dissertation does not already include this information, the dissertation may NOT be approved with no changes.
2. Pass with minor edits to the written dissertation
  - a. These include items such as grammatical changes; incorrect dates; transposed numbers in data; incorrect titles on graphs, charts, or images; and so on.
  - b. These may include some minor questions and/or issues raised during the oral defense. Example: an IRB question about process that is easily answered but was not included in the written dissertation.
3. Conditional pass
  - a. Any error in written factual details, results, findings, methods, design, or related items will constitute a major edit. This is not about errors in the work, but rather errors in the writing of the material.
  - b. If there are any substantive questions and/or issues raised during the question portion of the oral defense, whether raised by the committee members, any member of the full-time Doctoral Studies and Academic Research core team, or

any observer to the defense, those questions MUST be answered in full during the oral defense and MUST be included in the final written dissertation.

- c. The candidate MUST sufficiently address all required changes in the final written dissertation and receive approval from all committee members before the committee members, program chair, and dean can sign the dissertation.
4. Does not pass oral part of the defense while:
- a. The written dissertation is accepted with/without minor edits.
    - i. If a doctoral candidate does not pass the oral defense, the committee may request a second oral defense no sooner than the next consecutive semester, but only if the written dissertation was accepted.
  - b. The written dissertation is not accepted due to major edits needed.
    - i. If a doctoral candidate does not pass the oral defense, the committee may request that the candidate rework the dissertation to address the major edits or even a complete redesign if the written dissertation was not accepted.

DISS 9400 includes a dissertation publication guide and a program reflection survey for candidates. Completing this survey helps us understand your experience and is essential for the continuous improvement of our doctoral programs.

*After the dissertation defense, there are several administrative tasks to fulfill, such as closing the IRB protocol, ensuring the requirements for publishing the dissertation are met fully, and publishing the dissertation to the OhioLINK Electronic Theses and Dissertation Center.*

*Candidates cannot pass DISS 9400 and graduate without the successful completion of all these requirements.*

### **Break Term and Leave of Absence During Candidacy**

Understanding that circumstances arise in one's life that may require a doctoral candidate to briefly step away from their academic work, there are two conditions under which a candidate may temporarily pause their studies:

**Break Term** - A doctoral candidate may voluntarily take a term off and not formally enroll in dissertation courses. The goal of the break term is to focus on dissertation phase academic work, including research, writing, and analysis.

Because the purpose of the break term is to focus on their academic work, candidates on a break term will be able to utilize Franklin University library resources. The candidate's dissertation committee will remain intact so when they return from this one-term break, they will pick up where they left off.

Candidates must request a break term in writing to their doctoral program chair, indicate that their purpose in doing so is to continue their academic work, and request continued library access during the break term.

**Leave of Absence** - A doctoral candidate may take a voluntary leave of absence, lasting up to three consecutive terms, and pause their work on the dissertation, which includes research, writing, and analysis. All course registration and withdrawal policies still apply. The leave is due to conditions in a person's life such as personal or professional needs.

If the doctoral candidate requires more than three consecutive terms, a new leave of absence must be requested and approved.

In order for the doctoral candidate to return to their studies from their leave of absence, either during or at the conclusion of the three consecutive terms, they must give a 45-day notice to the doctoral program chair or Dean of Doctoral Studies. This action requires the

reformulation of the dissertation committee, depending on the availability and interest of the named members. The candidate will resume their dissertation academic work from the point where they left it.

A doctoral candidate engaged in dissertation work may be counseled by the Dean of Doctoral Studies, or their designee, for the option of selecting a break term or leave of absence under these conditions.

### **Suspension Policies During Candidacy**

A doctoral candidate engaged in dissertation work may be suspended under the following conditions:

- Failure to meet required program expectations, as evidenced by two consecutive terms of a grade of N/C or No Credit.
- A third failure to obtain IRB authorization to begin data collection.
- Failure to maintain acceptable program enrollment, excluding an approved break term or leave of absence.
- Conduct issues or academic integrity violations, as outlined in the university code of conduct policy.
- Issues around quality or capacity, discussed by the dissertation committee and Dean of Doctoral Studies.

Any doctoral candidate suspended from their program may appeal for reinstatement, at a later date, to the same program in which they were enrolled. A suspended candidate requesting program readmission must submit a written letter of appeal for program reinstatement at least 60 days before the start of the term in which the candidate proposes readmission. The letter of appeal must specify in detail the reasons and rationale for returning to their program work. The appeal must be directed to the appropriate program chair, who will then present the appeal to the Doctoral Studies Appeal Committee for consideration. The appeals committee will consist of the appropriate program chair, the

university registrar or their designee, and the Doctoral Studies dean or their designee. **The decision of the appeals committee is final.**

### **Doctoral Dismissal**

Following an earlier suspension, or directly for certain infractions, a doctoral candidate may be dismissed from a Franklin University doctoral program for any of the reasons below:

- Failure to maintain adequate academic status or progress, following an earlier suspension and readmission.
- Receipt of additional no credit grades in dissertation courses, following an earlier suspension and readmission.
- Failure to maintain acceptable program enrollment, following an earlier suspension and readmission.
- Failure to meet required program expectations, following an earlier suspension and readmission.
- A second failure on a dissertation defense.
- A third failure to obtain IRB authorization to begin data collection, after an earlier suspension.
- Issues around quality or capacity, discussed by the committee and Dean of Doctoral Studies.
- Conduct issues or academic integrity violations.

Doctoral dismissals are recommended by the Doctoral Studies program chair and determined by the Dean of Doctoral Studies and relevant university representatives. **The decision of the dismissal committee is final.**

### **DISSERTATION PROCESS**

The candidacy stage of the dissertation process is the time for the candidate to put in motion the entire knowledge accumulated during coursework. The doctoral candidate is responsible to design, conduct, and analyze a research study. Unlike coursework, there are no firm deadlines

during candidacy. The expectation is that the candidate drives the entire dissertation process with support from the committee, but the candidate is the one who owns the stage.

### **Dissertation Committee**

Each dissertation committee has a committee chair, a methodologist, and a reviewer. The candidate and the chair are a close pair and meet frequently without the entire committee. During the design stage at the beginning of the process, as well as during data collection and analysis, the candidate may work closely with the methodologist. Each committee has its own inner dynamics. Candidates often find themselves navigating their committees and figuring out how to best approach them. This process guarantees growth of the candidate and their ability to navigate and convince committee members of the merits of their dissertation.

### **Requirements to Serve on a Dissertation Committee**

Full-time and adjunct faculty who have completed all required training and credentialing may serve as dissertation committee members, with special requirements for roles as methodologist and committee chair.

Current qualifications and credentials for dissertation committee service are:

- Successful completion of INST 585, which includes current CITI certification.
- Committee reviewers and methodologists need at least two (2) years of experience since conferral of their doctorate.
  - Methodologists need to show evidence of expertise by submitting either 1) studies conducted on or using the design methods they will serve, 2) teaching experience in quantitative or qualitative research, or 3) peer-reviewed publications that utilize the design(s).
- Chairs need at least four (4) years of experience since conferral of their doctorate and must have successfully served three (3) candidates from comps to defense.

- The service of a faculty member who joins a dissertation committee post-IRB approval will not count toward the three (3) successful committees. The faculty must be involved in the entire process.
- Faculty who want to apply outside committee service to their three (3) committees required to serve as chair must have served at an institution where the committee is engaged in the day-to-day dissertation process, just as at Franklin University, from the starting point through the defense and publication.
  - This will preclude schools that have full-time staff to review and approve each section/facet of the dissertation with the committees, providing only oversight and not day-to-day operational work. Those dissertations are unacceptable to illustrate the faculty member's work on Franklin University dissertations. The faculty must have been the reviewing and approving body.
  - Franklin University and Doctoral Studies reserves the right to request samples of the dissertations used to establish adequate dissertation service to qualify as a chair.
  - Franklin University and Doctoral Studies reserves the right to remove faculty from any committee role if the performance of the faculty is not serving the candidate and the quality of work does not match the academic standards of Franklin University.

#### *Responsibilities of the Committee Chair*

- Directs the candidate's expectations and performance.
- Schedules and controls the committee's workings.
- Engages the methodologist early and as needed along the way.
- Works with the candidate on "draft" pieces until they are satisfactory to share with the entire committee.
- Coordinates the committee's feedback throughout the dissertation process.
- Closely reviews the candidate's IRB submission.

- Ensures the quality of the IRB protocol and certifies it.
- Enters the grade for DISS 9100 every semester.
- Maintains the DISS 9100 shell to include all the drafts, feedback, and checkmarks once pieces are completed.
- Moderates the proposal presentation.
- Moderates the dissertation defense.

#### *Responsibilities of the Methodologist*

- Engages with the candidate from the beginning of candidacy to design the study.
- Remains available during the data collection and data analysis process.
- Oversees chapters 3 and 4 of the dissertation.
- Provides feedback on the entire dissertation.
- Participates in the proposal presentation.
- Participates in the dissertation defense.

#### *Responsibilities of the Reviewer*

- Offers critical feedback on the completed draft of the research proposal.
- Offers critical feedback on the entire dissertation.
- Participates in the proposal presentation.
- Participates in the dissertation defense.
- Ensures that program outcomes are met.
- Ensures the quality of the dissertation.

#### *Responsibilities of the Doctoral Candidate*

- Expand the knowledge of their disciplinary field by pursuing a unique problem or question worthy of scholarly research.
- Ensure that the research study aligns with program outcomes.
- Maintain scholarly integrity and practice responsible conduct of research.

- Keep frequent communication with the dissertation chair and committee members.
- Be proactive and make dissertation writing and research progress each semester.
- Understand constructive feedback and address issues identified by the dissertation committee.
- Discuss deadlines and information on graduation and the defense with the committee chair.
- Complete the entire study within the 7-year limit from the moment of enrolling in a doctoral program.

*All dissertation work at Franklin University must be original and conducted independently. Collaborative or group dissertations are not permitted under any circumstance.*

### **Research Proposal**

The concise document that proposes a research or practical study is called a research proposal. This document, generally under 20 double-spaced pages, includes a brief summary of the key literature, an introduction to the research problem, and a thorough description of the methodology and recruitment process. In a nutshell, this is a detailed plan of what the study is about; what research question is being addressed; what hypotheses are being tested, if applicable; how the study will be conducted; how participants will be recruited; what the sampling method and the sampling size are; what instruments of data collection will be used; and what measures are taken against reliability and validity issues. The proposal needs to show the candidate's ownership of, and preparation for, the research. It includes well thought-out details and preparation for the actual work. This work is one of the most important writing pieces in the dissertation journey. The candidate makes the case for the study they are pursuing, gets the entire committee to agree on the details of the proposal, and makes a formal public defense about the proposed research.

Franklin University has three (3) dissertation research proposal templates for candidates to use: one for qualitative studies; one for quantitative studies; and one for mixed-methods studies. All proposals should follow the template generally, though candidates and their committees can

adjust parts that may not relate to the specific study or add parts that are more relevant. The dissertation research proposal template can be found in the modules of DISS 9100 and on the Doctoral Studies Resources page of the Office of Academic Scholarship (OAS) website: <https://www.franklin.edu/about-us/policy-information/office-academic-scholarship/resources>.

### **Proposal Presentation**

The proposal presentation is an opportunity to get in front of a public audience and discuss the merits of the proposed study. The candidate has already received formal written approval from the entire committee and is ready to face the public audience and discuss the details of the research study. No proposal should be scheduled without prior approval of the written proposal by the entire committee. *There is no pass or fail of the proposal presentation.* This is an opportunity for the candidate to receive additional feedback from the committee members and from a larger audience. During the presentation, new questions or ideas may arise that need to be addressed. Both the candidate and the committee can utilize the proposal presentation to reconsider every detail of the research study. Once the candidate and the committee set up a date and time for the presentation, the committee chair creates a Zoom meeting link in the DISS 9100 course and contacts [dissertations@franklin.edu](mailto:dissertations@franklin.edu) to distribute the invitation. This invite link needs to be sent to [dissertations@franklin.edu](mailto:dissertations@franklin.edu) at least two (2) weeks prior to the presentation's scheduled date. **The entire committee is required to be present at the proposal presentation.** *During Q&A, the entire committee needs to have their cameras on. The candidate needs to have their camera on the entire time.* If unexpected circumstances arise and someone cannot join live, the proposal will be recorded for that committee member to provide feedback. If such unexpected circumstances become known before the proposal presentation, the presentation will be rescheduled.

### **D-1 Form: Guidelines and Responsibilities After the Proposal Presentation**

Following the dissertation research proposal presentation, all doctoral candidates must complete a D-1 Form. The D-1 Form captures feedback from the proposal presentation and

ensures that recommended changes are documented, reviewed, and addressed prior to IRB submission.

The D-1 Form is emailed to the candidate, all committee members, the program chair, the Director of Candidacy, and the IRB Office within one (1) week of the proposal presentation. The email will include detailed instructions for completion.

#### *Purpose of the D-1 Form*

The D-1 Form serves as a structured tool to:

- Document all committee and attendee feedback from the proposal presentation;
- Create an actionable revision plan;
- Ensure proposal integrity and consistency across reviews; and
- Streamline the IRB review process.

#### *Candidate Responsibilities on the D-1 Form*

- Schedule a meeting with the chair and methodologist to review the action items listed in the D-1 Form.
- Revise the proposal in Microsoft Word with tracked changes turned on, incorporating the action items where appropriate.
- Complete the table in the D-1 Form, include tracked changes of the proposal, and have the entire committee sign the form to indicate their approval.

The completed D-1 Form must be uploaded to the IRB submission where indicated in the application. The IRB will return the submission without review if the D-1 Form is missing or incomplete.

A detailed how-to guide, including steps for using track changes and signing Word documents, is posted in DISS9100.

## Research Topics and Study Components

While Franklin University supports committee autonomy and independent intellectual inquiry, the university holds high standards of excellence and will not allow some studies and dissertations to move forward if they contain components that do not meet these standards. Each student is expected to complete an original and independent dissertation; collaborative or group dissertations are not permitted. The following are examples of issues and studies that are not permitted in dissertation work:

### *Research Topic*

- A systematic review of literature as the dissertation work. Candidates can instead conduct a meta-analysis or a meta-synthesis.
- A quantitative study that is too large and broad to be feasible and conducted within the Doctoral Studies timeframe of seven (7) years from enrollment.
- A qualitative or quantitative study that is not adding any new information/knowledge to theory or practice.
- Any study that is outside the scope of the program and does not meet program outcomes.
- Any study that intends to collect and classify lived experiences or perspectives of a small population without a clear practical goal, *or* without an intention to fill a gap in theory or practice, *or* without a comparison to other groups.
- Any study that requires psychological assessment or clinical interpretation are not permitted, as these fall outside the scope of Franklin University's academic preparation and ethical oversight frameworks.
- Any study that does not have any practical implication, but focuses only on cataloguing experiences, feelings, perspectives, beliefs, or emotions of participants.
- Any study that seeks predicted outcomes or findings where the candidate is clearly projecting the expected answers. These studies are highly biased and will not be accepted without the presence of a comparison or an additional group of participants.

### *Research Design*

- A quantitative study with two variables.
- A qualitative or quantitative study using summary reports of a previous study. While secondary data use is encouraged, the candidate needs to analyze the raw data from the secondary source and not use the reports of analyses of someone else.
- A qualitative or quantitative study with an insufficient sample size.
  - Appropriate sample sizes vary from study to study. In quantitative work, these are decided based on hypothesis testing. In qualitative work, sample sizes are determined by the difficulty of the topic, the vulnerability of the participants, and other specific details of the study. In both cases, appropriate sample sizes need to be substantial to produce findings, and candidates should be able to justify those numbers.
- A qualitative study that simply reports the findings but does not analyze or synthesize them into meaningful themes and/or sub-themes.

### *Dissertation Document*

- An annotated bibliography as the literature review chapter. The literature review needs to be a synthesis of the literature.
- Copying and pasting text or data from interviews as the findings chapter. Chapter 4 – Findings needs to be a chapter organized by themes and sub-themes for qualitative work and by hypothesis testing for quantitative work.

### *Dissertation Essentials*

All dissertations at Franklin University must adhere to and address the following components:

- Clear alignment of the research question with the gap in literature, methodology, and study findings.
- Clear alignment with program outcomes.

- Discussion of study significance. There should be a clear discussion of how the findings address a practical problem and what the expected actions are.

Strongly suggested study designs for all dissertations include the following components:

- As applicable, inclusion of a comparative group, preferably a group that holds different views from the target population of the study. This adds a holistic view of the topic.
- The design of a practical application directly linked to the data collected.
- Extensive time in fieldwork and multiple data collection sources for qualitative studies.

### **Institutional Review Board (IRB)**

All doctoral candidates must submit their studies to the IRB prior to starting any data collection. Franklin University's IRB website should be your starting point to learn about human subjects research and the steps required to secure IRB approval prior to collecting data for your study. The website contains information about Cayuse, CITI training, IRB application procedures, policies and guidance documents, and other useful information. See [www.franklin.edu/irb](http://www.franklin.edu/irb).

Franklin University uses Cayuse for IRB study submissions and protocol management. Doctoral candidates are added to Cayuse once enrolled in DISS 9100 and ready to begin the IRB process. Please refer to the IRB website for information on accessing and using Cayuse.

### **CITI Training**

Anyone who conducts human subjects research at Franklin University must complete training before any research activities commence and before submitting a research protocol to the IRB for review. The Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) provides an online training course to satisfy this requirement and must be completed by all faculty, staff, and students/candidates involved in human subjects research. CITI educational courses help researchers to understand their obligations to protect the rights and welfare of human participants in research.

Take the following steps to complete your CITI training:

1. Log on to the CITI homepage: [www.citiprogram.org](http://www.citiprogram.org) and click on the Register link. You will register with Franklin University. Be sure to use your Franklin University email address.
2. Franklin learners and faculty must complete the **Social and Behavioral Research (SBE)** course. Additional elective courses are available but not required to conduct human subjects research at the university. The SBE course will take a few hours to complete, but you are not required to complete all modules in one sitting.

To learn more about Franklin's requirements, refer to the CITI page on the IRB website. There you will find additional details about keeping your training current.

Use this link to learn more about CITI: <https://www.franklin.edu/about-us/policy-information/office-academic-scholarship/institutional-review-board-irb/citi>

### **Data Collection**

Doctoral candidates start their data collection after they receive an IRB approval or determination letter. Some studies are based on original data collection, while others are based on secondary data or data already available from various sources. Original data collection can be qualitative or quantitative, and depending on the instrument that candidates utilize to collect information, the original data collection can take anywhere from a few weeks to a few months. Qualitative data collection tends to take more time and effort than quantitative data collection. Secondary data collection can be qualitative or quantitative. Common sources of finding secondary data are research universities, governmental organizations, non-profit organizations, private businesses, and certain sites dedicated to storing datasets. AI-generated data is strictly prohibited and will result in academic misconduct report. The candidate works closely with the methodologist during the data collection process. There are often unknowns, questions, and new circumstances that emerge during this time.

## **Data Analysis**

Data analysis is the period after data collection is complete, when the candidate works to analyze, organize, code, and interpret information. Normally longer for qualitative studies than quantitative ones, this is often a time of great discoveries, insights, and rewards for candidates and their committees. It is important to allow sufficient time for the data analysis stage, as it makes the dissertation work come together; everything else before data analysis is preparation for it. Consider the entire dissertation as a research or practical study that is attempting to answer the research question. The literature review is information around the topic and justification for conducting the study. Then we attempt to answer the research question by planning out a methodology of how we are going to answer this question. We follow up on our work and during data analysis, we attempt to answer the research question we started with. This is where the findings emerge, and where there is considerable thought about interpretations of those findings. Candidates work closely with their methodologist and their chair during data analysis.

## **Dissertation Defense**

*After the written dissertation is approved by the entire dissertation committee, the candidate and the committee work together to schedule a time and date for the defense.* Franklin University has specific timeline procedures for when a candidate can defend within a given semester, so please check with the Doctoral Studies Coordinator regarding a given semester. Candidates apply for graduation at the beginning of the semester in which they intend to defend. The last day to hold a defense is approximately four (4) weeks prior to the end of the semester. Committee chairs fill out a [Defense Request](#) form for the candidate.

The committee chair is the moderator of the dissertation defense. Once the invitation for the defense is ready, the committee chair sends it to [dissertations@franklin.edu](mailto:dissertations@franklin.edu) so it can be forwarded to the general public. The Zoom link needs to be created in the DISS 9100 course shell so Doctoral Studies has access to the recording. *The entire committee should be present at the doctoral defense.* If something unexpected happens and one committee member is

unavailable cannot be present at the defense, the defense continues as scheduled with the other two members. However, the final decision will be made only after the missing committee member has had time to review the recording from the oral defense. If one committee member becomes permanently unavailable, the program chair and/or the dean can approve/disapprove the dissertation instead of the committee member who is missing from the defense. If there is prior knowledge of a committee member not being able to attend the defense, the dissertation defense may be rescheduled.

*The entire committee needs to have their cameras turned on during the Q&A portion of the defense. The candidate must have their camera turned on throughout the entire defense.*

### **Checklist after the Dissertation Defense**

Successful completion of the dissertation defense can be with or without edits to the dissertation document. If the dissertation requires any changes, these need to be addressed and approved by the entire committee before the steps below are completed. These steps assume a positive outcome on the defense and approval of edits, if applicable.

- Complete DISS 9400 Doctoral Program Evaluation Survey on Canvas.
- Close out your IRB protocol. Once approved and closed, you will receive a notification email from Cayuse confirming the closure of your study.
  - Tip: Closing your IRB protocol is the same process as any other submission you open in Cayuse. Log in to Cayuse and pull up your study. You will see a blue rectangle in the upper right corner of the screen that says 'New Submission'. Click on that button and select 'Closure'. Make sure you pull up your study once you are in your dashboard; otherwise, you will not find the 'New Submission' option.
- When your committee approves your final dissertation, your three committee members, program chair, and Dean of Doctoral Studies all sign the dissertation approval form. Once you receive the dissertation approval form, you can submit your dissertation to the format check assignment in DISS 9400. The format check

official will review the formatting and return a form listing corrections needed to meet the University's formatting requirements. This process will repeat until your dissertation satisfies the formatting requirements.

- Note that the candidate's name must match on all documents. The name listed on a student's official record at Franklin University is the name that must appear on the dissertation approval form, the final dissertation, and in the OhioLINK submission.
- Once your dissertation passes the format check assignment, you can publish your dissertation in the OhioLINK Electronic Theses and Dissertations Center. Follow the publication steps included in the OhioLINK Upload assignment in DISS 9400. You will receive a confirmation from OhioLINK when this has been completed successfully.

## **DISSERTATION WRITING AND PUBLICATION**

### **Writing the Dissertation**

Franklin University follows the American Psychological Association (APA) guidelines. All dissertations must adhere to Franklin's dissertation template and conform to the style, format, and accessibility standards specified in the document titled "A Guide to Submitting Your Dissertation".

Franklin's dissertation template and "A Guide to Submitting Your Dissertation" can be found on the Doctoral Studies Resources page of the Office of Academic Scholarship (OAS) website:

<https://www.franklin.edu/about-us/policy-information/office-academic-scholarship/resources>.

### **Publishing Your Dissertation**

All dissertations completed at Franklin University must be published according to the requirements set forth in "A Guide to Submitting Your Dissertation", which can be found on the Doctoral Studies Resources page of the Office of Academic Scholarship (OAS) website:

<https://www.franklin.edu/about-us/policy-information/office-academic-scholarship/resources>.

The University's formatting requirements are publication requirements. This means that the formatting standards which a dissertation must satisfy to pass the format check assignment and be published in the OhioLINK ETD are the ones in place at the time the dissertation is published.

### **Accessibility Requirement**

To ensure digital accessibility of dissertations, Franklin University requires that dissertations submitted to the OhioLINK ETD meet the following requirements:

- Dissertation was properly exported to PDF and includes required document tags;
- The student has included a PDF file of the dissertation which includes full text;
- The PDF accessibility flag is checked;
- The text language of the PDF is specified;
- Figures and images include valid alternate text;
- The PDF document properties include the title, author, keywords, and subject;
- At least one heading level is included in the text and the document has appropriate headings; and
- If color is used, it must not be the only means of conveying information and the text contrast of colors must not trigger a hard to read text contrast error.

### **Importance of Writing**

Writing lies at the heart of any student/candidate's doctoral work. While coursework, exams, and the dissertation will lend students/candidates considerable new knowledge in their research area, the progress a student/candidate makes across these stages will also develop and demand sound academic writing and research skills.

To help students develop these skills, the doctoral writing program positions students to:

- Discover what distinguishes “good” writing in their field.
- Uncover and practice the habits that make writers successful.
- Draw on a range of resources to develop writing skills and habits throughout the degree process.

Just as a student’s understanding of “good” writing is continually shaped by the authors they read and the professors who mentor them, the writing program’s philosophy of good writing is informed by a range of stakeholders: students, writing faculty, faculty in other disciplines, partners at other institutions, and writing studies researchers.

In doctoral programs, good writing is characterized by five features:

1. **Sound Reasoning:** Good writing advances a coherent, well-evidenced line of reasoning that makes a novel contribution to the student’s field. Just what makes a line of reasoning “well-evidenced” or what distinguishes a “contribution” may vary across fields.
2. **Reader Engagement:** Good writing anticipates what expectations and values readers bring to the text in order to inform or to persuade this audience.
3. **Genre Awareness:** Good writing realizes the conventions of the given type of text. The literature review, for example, has features that distinguish it from the research paper or article abstract.
4. **Stylistic Savvy:** Good writing generates from language that is clear, cogent, and concise. It also conforms to the seventh edition of the American Psychological Association style manual.
5. **Scholarly Citations:** Good writing incorporates inclusion of relevant scholarly sources to support the material.

Developing these qualities takes significant time, and this work will extend over the course of an academic’s career. Writing is an exciting, complex activity that will intrigue, surprise, challenge, and reward students/candidates throughout their doctoral journey.

## Embargo Policies

Franklin University generally does not allow publication embargoes on dissertations unless justified on a case-by-case basis. To request an embargo, note the following:

- Any embargo request must be submitted to the Office of Academic Scholarship (OAS) at [oas@franklin.edu](mailto:oas@franklin.edu).
- If the embargo request is approved by the Office of Academic Scholarship, it will notify the graduate, the dissertation committee, and the Electronic Theses and Dissertations (ETD) administrator, who will post it as approved through the embargo request in both the OhioLINK ETD Center and Franklin University Scholarly Exchange (FUSE).
- The maximum time allowed for an approved embargo is one (1) year.

## Changes to Dissertation After Publication

Franklin University does not permit changes to published dissertations except for the following situations:

- For **minor typographical errors**, the university will permit the candidate to submit a correction on a separate errata sheet which must identify the original dissertation, the location and nature of the error, and the correction. The errata form must be submitted to the Office of Academic Scholarship at [oas@franklin.edu](mailto:oas@franklin.edu).
- If the Office of Academic Scholarship approves the correction, it will notify the dissertation committee of the correction and provide the errata to the Electronic Theses and Dissertations (ETD) administrator, who will post it as an additional file alongside the dissertation in the OhioLINK Electronic Theses and Dissertations (ETD) Center and Franklin University Scholarly Exchange (FUSE).
- For cases of **copyright infringement**, or **where a dissertation contains identifiable information about a study participant**, the Office of Academic Scholarship may review the dissertation and determine whether the dissertation should be removed or edited.

## APPENDIX

### **Committee Profiles Listings**

<https://www.franklin.edu/committee-listing>

### **Request a Committee Change**

<https://forms.office.com/r/y4b2mysD11>

### **Request a Third Attempt for the Comprehensive Exam**

<https://forms.office.com/r/7r9PzUFUpq>

### **IRB Website**

<https://www.franklin.edu/irb>

### **Library Support**

<https://www.franklin.edu/learning-commons/tutoring-workshops>

### **Office of Academic Scholarship (OAS) Website**

Here you can find templates for the dissertation and research proposal, the dissertation roadmap, a video library on qualitative and quantitative methods, guidelines on publishing the dissertation, and several useful articles about the dissertation process.

<https://www.franklin.edu/oas>

# MEET OUR TEAM

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**JOEL ASHLEY**  
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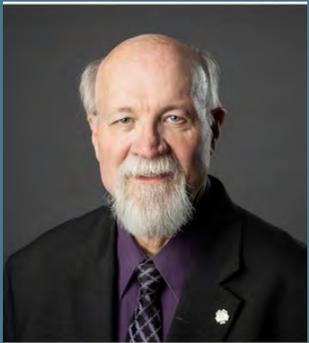
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# MEET OUR TEAM

## DOCTORAL STUDIES



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# Contact Us

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