

Department of Educational Leadership & Sport Management

DISSERTATION PROPOSAL DEFENSE (D-1) GUIDELINES

Approved by the Educational Leadership program faculty fall 2020 | Effective spring 2021 | Send edits to: j.gallagher@wsu.edu

This document provides guidelines pertaining to all aspects of the dissertation proposal defense (D-1): preparation, presentation, and follow-up tasks. How you defend your ideas in the dissertation proposal defense, both conceptually and methodologically, as well as how you respond to feedback, assures your committee you are ready to pursue your dissertation research study. These guidelines are intended to assist you in meeting the expectations of your committee members for a successful proposal defense.

PREPARING for the D-1

- **Draft the proposal:** You should expect to engage in multiple rounds of extensive revisions of the introduction, literature review, and proposed methodology. *This process will take time.* Once you have received approval from your dissertation chair, you are advised to plan for a period of three to four weeks for your committee members to read and review your dissertation proposal. The very latest you can send your proposal to your committee is two weeks prior to the defense date. Failure to meet this two-week minimum may result in your proposal defense meeting being cancelled and rescheduled.
- **Prepare the IRB application:** After sending the proposal to your committee, begin preparing Washington State University (WSU) Institutional Review Board (IRB) documents (<http://www.irb.wsu.edu/>) so you are ready to submit them immediately following a successful proposal defense.
 - You will need your certificate number from your CITI training in the ethical use of human participants research. Depending on your proposed research study, multiple forms including and beyond the application for human subject research may be needed. Refer to <http://www.irb.wsu.edu/forms.asp> for all of the documents required for submission to the WSU IRB.
 - You are responsible for completing your IRB application. In all cases the dissertation chair should be listed as the Principal Investigator (PI) on the application. As such, the dissertation chair is required to submit your application materials to the IRB on your behalf.
- **Prepare the defense presentation:** Prepare a presentation to your committee that defends and justifies the conceptualization and methodological choices of your proposed research study. Please assume your committee has already read your proposal and is prepared to discuss and critically analyze your proposed research study. When considering how to construct the presentation, focus on the three main elements of the proposal – introduction, literature review, and methodology.
 - Here is a list of potential slides you are likely to include (in consultation with your dissertation chair):
 - Introduction with purpose statement and clear research questions guiding your study (~1 slide)
 - Literature review and theoretical perspective informing your study and how it frames how you will analyze your findings (~1-2 slides)
 - Study design (population/sample; data collection methods and forms of data you will collect; researcher positionality; trustworthiness, validity, and reliability of your study) (~3 slides)
 - Analysis methodology explaining how you will analyze the data you will collect (including coding schema or statistical approach) (~1-2 slides)
 - Potential implications of your study for research, practice, and/or policy (~1 slide)
 - Lingering questions for the committee (~1 slide)

- The presentation should be scholarly in nature and extraneous images should not be included. Images, tables, and figures should be provided only to enhance understanding. Remember, the focus of the proposal defense is to discuss your conceptual and methodological ideas so your committee will agree that the research study is both reasonable and achievable.
- Send an electronic copy of your presentation to all committee members at least 24 hours in advance of the proposal defense so they can anticipate what will occur in the presentation, as well as access the presentation on their own electronic devices for easy reference during your proposal defense.

DURING the D-1

- **Timing and general procedures:** The dissertation proposal defense is typically scheduled for 1 ½ - 2 hours, and your dissertation chair will begin the meeting by discussing the process that will be followed. You should be prepared to present for a maximum of 20-30 minutes during the allotted 1 ½ - 2 hours to leave ample time for the discussion of, and revision to, your proposed research study. Plan to practice ahead of time, with attention to eliminating any inessential or repetitive information so you do not exceed the time allotted for your presentation.
- **Discussion:** Once you have presented your proposed research study, and following the process discussed by your dissertation chair at the beginning of the meeting, be prepared to justify various aspects of your proposal including, but not limited to, the scope of the research study, the proposed research study's design, the significance of the research study, and the instrumentation. The purpose of this discussion is to ensure you have a suitable conceptual and methodological understanding of your proposed study, and that the study is reasonable as a dissertation.
- **Expectation of student notetaking during D-1:** Suggested revisions to your study will be embedded in the discussion that follows your presentation. Your committee will identify numerous changes to both conceptualization and methodology that you will need to incorporate before the study can proceed. Be prepared to take copious notes on the expectations that your committee members have for revisions to your research study, as you will be required to provide a memo of these revisions (see below).

AFTER the D-1

- **Memo of revisions:** Within a week of the proposal defense, send an email to your entire committee, attaching a polished memo of the revisions that surfaced that you need to make prior to conducting your research, as well as any revisions that are to be reflected in the final version of your dissertation. Sending this email demonstrates your understanding and confirmation of the revisions needed, as well as allows your committee to clarify any misunderstandings before you begin your research study.
- **Edit IRB documents and submit:** In addition to providing the revisions in a memo to your committee, you will also need to modify your IRB documents based upon those revisions before you submit them to the WSU IRB for review. After the revisions are made, you can submit your IRB, (with a cc to your dissertation chair).
- **IRB revisions and preparing for data collection:** It can take five to seven weeks after your IRB documents are submitted for you to receive approval for your research study. Please anticipate repeated requests from the WSU IRB for clarifications and resubmissions and build this into your planning for the period between your proposal defense and the commencement of data collection. Once your documents are submitted, you should be in communication with your dissertation chair about a plan for data collection, which cannot begin until **after** the WSU IRB has approved your research study.