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COLLEGE

**PsyD PROGRAM IN CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY**  
**CLINICAL DISSERTATION MANUAL**

## INTRODUCTION TO CLINICAL DISSERTATION

The faculty of Medaille College's PsyD Program in Clinical Psychology views the dissertation to be an essential component of doctoral education. The clinical dissertation is an original scholarly work whose successful completion demonstrates the student's ability to:

- formulate a problem, question, or issue of relevance to the professional practice of clinical psychology;
- identify, understand, and apply a method for collecting data intended to address the problem, question, or issue under study;
- analyze, interpret, evaluate, and integrate the findings in a way that provides new knowledge about—and thereby contributes to solving—the problem, question, or issue under investigation.

As an original work of scholarship, the dissertation requires mastery of subject matter; the ability to understand and critically evaluate theoretical, conceptual, and research literature; to integrate and reason from knowledge thereby derived; clear, professional written communication; and planning, time management, organization, task execution, and persistence. In its final form, the dissertation should be of publishable quality and contribute to the body of knowledge in professional psychology. A flowchart providing an overview of the dissertation process may be found in Appendix A.

### TYPES OF DISSERTATIONS FOR THE PsyD DEGREE IN CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY

As presented in the list immediately below, and consistent with the diversity characterizing dissertations across different PsyD programs in Clinical Psychology, a variety of options are available for the type of clinical dissertation the student may undertake. Essential characteristics of these different types of dissertation have been well described by a number of programs and as such their descriptions are directly cited. The order of this list is not based on the importance or quality of the type of dissertation. The fundamental criterion in choosing a particular type of dissertation is that it be logically and methodologically appropriate for the topic and question(s) the student is interested in addressing.

**1.) Empirical Studies:** Involve “the collection, analysis, and interpretation of original data (broadly defined to include secondary analysis of archival data already available, replications, content analysis, media, etc.) to address a problem of theoretical or practical interest” (Antioch University, 2017, p. DH-4)

**a.) Quantitative:** The quantitative dissertation is an empirical study of a topic relevant to the professional practice of psychology utilizing quantitative research techniques. It seeks to make a scholarly contribution to the field using either original data collected during the course of the dissertation or archival data from a preexisting data set

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(i.e., secondary analysis of data). “Examples of methodologies for these types of studies include but are not limited to, group experiments, single case research, quasi-experimental, ex post facto or causal comparative, correlational. With these types of studies, it is expected that students will develop specific research questions and hypotheses and will conduct empirical testing of predictions derived from these hypotheses. Other examples of quantitative research studies include meta-analyses and program evaluation/needs assessment [described in greater detail below]” (Rutgers, 2015, p. 7). The *sine qua non* for the quantitative dissertation is the analysis of numerical data. The majority of material pertinent to this type of dissertation is covered in a "research methods" class for conducting quantitative research.

**b.) Qualitative:** A qualitative dissertation is an empirical study that uses interviewing and other forms of systematic, open-ended inquiry to collect detailed descriptions of participants’ first-hand experiences in a specific situation of interest; these in-depth descriptions are analyzed through interpretive methods designed to bring forth thematic meanings embedded in participants’ subjective experiences and how their behavior is influenced by those meanings. Qualitative methods include, but are far from limited to, “interview studies, focus group studies, phenomenological studies, participatory methods, and program evaluation” (Pepperdine University, 2017, p. 3).

**c.) Mixed Methods:** A research investigation containing both quantitative and qualitative elements. A mixed method study creates a rich form of understanding about the phenomenon under study through integrating knowledge yielded by both investigative modes.

**2.) Meta-analysis:** “Meta-analysis, as its name implies, involves data analysis at a more general level than standard descriptive or inferential statistics. It uses findings across studies, as opposed to responses drawn from individuals, as the data to be analyzed. After following the procedures of traditional narrative review with respect to selection of topic and relevant literature, the meta-analyst transforms the findings from each study (*t*-tests, correlations, *F* ratios, etc.) into measures of effect size. The next step is to examine the variance of effects across studies to determine whether the differences observed between studies are greater than that which would be expected from simple sampling variance. If there is evidence of additional variance (note that in fact this is rather uncommon), other carefully suggested, theoretically relevant moderating variables may be examined, such as sample characteristics, measures employed, etc. These moderating variables should, for the most part, be chosen and defended prior to the performing of the analysis, lest choosing a grocery basketful of *post hoc* hypotheses produce significant findings simply by capitalizing on chance. On the other hand, the influence of some study characteristics on findings may only be manifest after the data has been gathered (e.g., Donahue, 1985). To perform a meta-analysis, the student needs to learn the analytical procedures unique to it, such as transforming a variety of inferential statistics into a common effect size measure, and some of the basic issues surrounding the technique as a whole. Of great benefit, sophisticated software has been developed to simplify the effort involved in calculations, so that the student may focus more attention on interpretation” (Institute for the Psychological Sciences, 2012, p. 17). Numerous articles centering on quantitative

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meta-analysis may be found in the journal *Clinical Psychology Review*.

**3.) Systematic Review of the Literature:** “According to the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (American Psychological Association, 2001):

Review articles...are critical evaluations of material that has already been published. By organizing, integrating, and evaluating previously published material, the author of a review article considers the progress of current research toward clarifying a problem. In a sense, a review article is tutorial in that the author

- defines and clarifies the problem;
- summarizes previous investigations in order to inform the reader of the state of current research;
- identifies relations, contradictions, gaps, and inconsistencies in the literature; and
- suggests the next step or steps in solving the problem. (p. 7)

Thus writing a literature review involves two tasks: 1) describing work done on a specific area of research, and 2) evaluating this work. Both the descriptive and evaluative elements are important parts of the review. Do not simply describe past work without evaluating it, and do not just discuss recent theories in an area without both describing the work done to test those theories and discussing each theory’s advantages and inadequacies. Review articles are valuable information sources not only because they cite every important piece of research in the area surveyed, but also because they compare and evaluate all the key theories in a particular area of research....

There are two general approaches to a literature review:

- Choose an area of research, read all the relevant and most important studies, and devise a meaningful way to organize the studies. One example of an organizing theme is a conflict or controversy in an area; in this case, publications presenting all sides of the controversy should be reviewed.
- Trace the development of a particular concept over time, concluding with a critical analysis of the present state of the question and suggestions for further research” (Roosevelt University, 2013, p. 19).

APA publishes a journal, *Psychological Bulletin*, whose primary mission is to present articles of precisely this type. The journal *Clinical Psychology Review* also contains numerous literature-review articles. Students considering this sort of dissertation are *strongly encouraged* to consult these two journals for a host of examples, including variations in the form that a systematic literature review may take.

**4.) Theoretical Studies:** “Theoretical studies are closely and carefully reasoned efforts to synthesize existing theory and research [in a specific area pertaining to professional

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psychology] in order to propose a new and original way of explaining, organizing or understanding [the area of interest]. Theoretical studies should include an extensive, critical review of the existing literature, a proposed model for understanding the literature,

and a discussion of [clinical and research] implications for the field of clinical psychology” (California Institute of Integral Studies, p. 14). A different type of theoretical study may entail a systematic, empirically-based evaluation of alternative theories in the student’s focal area of interest.

It is strongly recommended that students interested in doing a dissertation of this type consult the APA journal *Psychological Review*, which is devoted to articles that make important theoretical contributions to the literature.

**5.) Program Evaluation:** Program evaluation consists of “an empirical study explicitly intended to support the design, delivery, or impact of a human service program....[A program evaluation study] may include questions pertaining to program utilization, implementation, fine-tuning, and effectiveness. The use of traditional empirical, as well as action research methods is supported” (Antioch University, p. DH-4)

**6.) Needs Assessment:** A needs assessment is a type of dissertation related to program evaluation that can be carried out either in conjunction with the latter or as a separate project unto itself. Needs assessment “entails the use of a systematic process for determining and addressing the specific needs of an organization, important stakeholders within that organization [and/or a specific, well-defined population].... A needs assessment tends to be an integral part of a planning process that can subsequently lead to some type of improvement in a system or organization [and/or in service delivery]” (Rutgers University, 2014, p. 8)

**7.) Design of an Innovative Program:** This type of project consists of “a design in-depth of a program of psychological strategy, methodology or techniques to achieve some goal consistent with contemporary principles of professional psychology. The program developed must demonstrate application of relevant theory, research, and consideration of similar programs reported in the literature in its design, and must include a detailed plan or guideline for the evaluation of the program developed, even though the evaluation will not be conducted as part of the dissertation” (Rutgers University, 2014, p. DH-4). Programs that may be designed include “treatment interventions, prevention programs, organization consultations, etc.” (Antioch University, 2017, p. DH-4).

**8.) Case Study:** “A case study involves a comprehensive, systematic, rigorous, qualitative analysis of one or more clinical case studies involving a particular type of presenting problem and theoretical approach of clinical interest to the student. These studies involve standardized, quantitative measures of outcome, and sometimes standardized, quantitative measures of process. For examples of such case studies, see the open access, online, peer-reviewed journal, *Pragmatic Case Studies in Psychotherapy* (<http://pcsp.libraries.rutgers.edu>)” (Rutgers University, 2014, p. 8) and the journal *Clinical Case Studies* (available online through Medaille Libraries).

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**9.) The Relationship Between Psychology and Public Policy.** “There are many areas of public policy where psychology might have an impact, either by direct service or through consultation based on existing psychological knowledge and practice (e.g., nuclear arms; environmental policy, policies affecting children, mentally ill, elderly, etc.). Dissertations of this type involve a thorough analysis of the history and rationale for a current policy; a rigorous and critical integration of relevant psychological knowledge; and specific recommendations for policy modification, research, and/or service that might be provided by professional psychologists” (Antioch University, 2017, p. DH-4). Consistent with the growing role of psychologists as policy advocates (see American Psychological Association, 2014; Cohen, Lee, & McIlwraith, 2012; Hill, 2013; cf. <http://www.apa.org/pi/about/publications/caregivers/advocacy/psychologists.aspx>), a policy advocacy dissertation represents another type of dissertation reflecting and embodying the relationship between psychology and public policy.

### **SELECTING A DISSERTATION CHAIR AND COMMITTEE**

It is the student’s responsibility to form a Dissertation Committee, consisting of one Chair and two additional members—although a student’s Committee may include, in addition to the Chair, up to four additional members. The Chair must be a full-time member of the Medaille Faculty; in the event that she or he is not a member of the PsyD Program’s core faculty, at least one core-faculty member from the latter Program must serve on the Committee.

The student’s first step in forming a Dissertation Committee is selecting a Committee Chair. This is preceded by the student identifying a dissertation topic that she or he is strongly interested in pursuing, meeting individually with one or more faculty to discuss this topic and determine the extent of mutual interest in the topic at hand, and based on information so gathered, identifying a potential faculty member to serve as Committee Chair. The student asks this faculty member if she or he would serve in this role, and this process is repeated until a specific faculty member has agreed to assume the role as the student’s Dissertation Chair. This faculty member completes, signs, and dates the appropriate section of the Dissertation Committee Form (see Appendix B) certifying that she or he has agreed to serve as the student’s Committee Chair.

Subsequently, the Chair and student identify and discuss potential individuals who might serve as additional members of the student’s Committee. Additional members may be chosen from among (a) other full-time faculty members of the Department of Counseling and Clinical Psychology, (b) full-time faculty in other Medaille College academic Departments, and/or (c) professionals from other settings whose areas of interest and expertise are clearly pertinent to the student’s dissertation topic. All Committee members must hold a doctoral degree in their respective areas of scholarship and/or practice, along with additional credentials suited to their position (e.g., professional licensure in the case of a mental health professional). Once the student and Chair have collaboratively decided upon who would be the most appropriate individuals to serve as Committee members, the student is responsible for contacting and asking each such individual to serve on her or his Committee. When a potential member has indicated a willingness to do so, she or he also fills in, signs, and dates the appropriate

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section of the Dissertation Committee Form certifying this agreement. When the Chair and all other members of the Committee have completed the Dissertation Committee Form, the student submits this form to her or his Chair for filing.

In the event that there is a change in the student's Committee Chair, the new Chair will complete, sign, and date the appropriate section of a new Dissertation Committee Form certifying that she or he has agreed to serve as the student's Committee Chair.

### **Responsibilities of Chair and Committee Members**

**Committee Chair.** The Committee Chair serves as the student's principle mentor, consultant, and advisor throughout the entire dissertation process. Specific responsibilities include the following:

- helping the student translate her or his dissertation topic and idea into a specific project in which all components, separately and as a unified whole, meet the standards of excellence in scholarship expected of a clinical dissertation
- advising the student in the selection of additional dissertation committee members
- advising and supervising the student throughout all phases of preparing and writing the dissertation proposal and the final dissertation manuscript
- reading and providing feedback to the student on iterative drafts of the dissertation proposal and the final dissertation
- approving the penultimate draft of the proposal and prior to this approval, at her or his discretion, having the student distribute this draft to all dissertation committee members for their review and feedback
- ensuring that the student incorporates into the proposal all revisions requested by committee members; the Chair may consult with the latter as needed during this process
- approving the final draft of the dissertation proposal and in turn its distribution to all committee members in preparation for the proposal oral defense meeting
- helping the student, as needed, in scheduling the proposal defense and final dissertation defense meetings
- chairing the student's proposal oral defense and final dissertation defense meetings in accord with procedures described below (see Defending the Dissertation Proposal and Dissertation Oral Defense Meeting, respectively )
- ensuring that all required revisions stemming from the proposal defense meeting are incorporated by the student into the final version of the proposal

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- when it is determined that all required revisions have been satisfactorily incorporated, approving the final version of the dissertation proposal; the Chair may consult with other Committee Members as needed prior to providing final approval
- supervising and providing consultation and advisement to the student throughout all phases of implementing the dissertation proposal (e.g., conducting one's empirical study, analyzing the data, and interpreting findings; developing the finalized organizational structure for presenting one's systematic review of the literature; discussing findings as these pertain to the questions addressed by the systematic literature review)
- approving the penultimate draft of the final dissertation manuscript and in turn its distribution to all dissertation committee members for their review and feedback
- approving the final draft of the completed dissertation and its distribution to all committee members for their review prior to the final dissertation oral defense meeting; the Chair may consult with other Committee Members as needed prior to granting this approval
- if, based on the dissertation oral defense meeting, revisions are required in the final dissertation, overseeing their incorporation into the revised draft
- reading and providing feedback on the revised draft(s) of the final dissertation; the Chair has the discretion to obtain input from Committee Members during this process, including requesting that the student forward any such draft to members of the Committee
- approving the final draft of the completed dissertation manuscript
- providing the student permission to proceed with the additional steps necessary for conferral of the PsyD Degree in Clinical Psychology
- facilitating the resolution of any difficulties (e.g., conflicts) that may arise at any point during the dissertation process
- providing the core faculty of the PsyD Program with feedback on the student's progress during the dissertation process
- reviewing and signing all forms required throughout the aforementioned process
- serving as the student's academic advisor upon assuming the role of Dissertation Chair (PsyD Core only).

**Committee Members.** Dissertation committee members are directly involved in evaluating, providing feedback on, and decision making regarding the student's clinical dissertation. Specific responsibilities include the following:

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- providing consultative input to the student during preparation of the dissertation proposal
- prior to the proposal oral defense meeting, formally reviewing and providing written feedback on the penultimate draft of the dissertation proposal
- physically attending the proposal defense meeting and, following the student's presentation of the proposal, raising specific questions, concerns, and/or issues pertaining to any aspect of the proposal; in the event that physically attending the proposal defense meeting is excessively burdensome for a committee member, she or he may participate in the meeting through Skype, Zoom, or the technological equivalent
- participating in the Committee's decision as to the outcome of the proposal, and if the outcome is "Pass with Revisions," indicating specific revisions viewed as necessary before the proposal can receive final approval from the Dissertation Chair; if the outcome is "Fail," committee members will indicate revisions they view as necessary before the student can schedule a second defense of the dissertation proposal
- being available both to the student to provide clarification regarding requested revisions to the dissertation proposal and to the Dissertation Chair for consultation prior to the latter arriving at a decision regarding final approval of the revised dissertation proposal
- following final approval of the proposal, being available to the student and to the Dissertation Chair to provide consultative input during all phases of implementing of the dissertation project
- prior to the final dissertation oral defense meeting, formally reviewing and providing feedback on the penultimate draft of the final dissertation manuscript
- paralleling roles and responsibilities pertaining to the proposal defense, physically attending the oral defense of the final dissertation, presenting questions, concerns, and/or issues pertaining to any aspect of the final dissertation manuscript and/or the dissertation project more broadly, participating in the Committee's decision as to the outcome of the final defense, and indicating specific revisions viewed as necessary in the event that the outcome is "Pass with Revisions" or "Fail." Similar to the proposal meeting, a committee member may participate in the final defense meeting through Skype, Zoom, or the technological equivalent if physically attending the final dissertation defense meeting is excessively burdensome.
- being available both to the student to provide clarification regarding requested revisions to the final dissertation and to the Chair for consultation prior to the latter arriving at a decision regarding final approval of the revised dissertation.
- affixing signatures and dates to all pertinent forms throughout the dissertation process

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## CLINICAL DISSERTATION PROPOSAL

The dissertation proposal represents a critical stage in the development of the PsyD dissertation. In this proposal, the student demonstrates expertise in the identified topic area, which includes an understanding of and ability to communicate concepts, research findings, and methods relevant to his or her dissertation project in a scholarly manner. Of equal importance, an effective proposal presents a workable plan for completing the rest of the dissertation manuscript. Integral to the proposal is a clear and explicit description of the specific question, problem, or issue that is to be examined, a critical review of the literature that establishes the context for the project and makes the case for the distinct question, problem, or issue to be addressed, and a description of the methodology for conducting the project. In essence, the proposal should serve as the framework for the completed dissertation except that the method is proposed in the future tense; if effectively written, the student will to a considerable extent have written an important part of the final dissertation in preparing it.

The Introduction and Method chapters are the core components of the written proposal. However, the nature of the material presented in each of these chapters varies depending on the type of dissertation one is proposing. In what follows, essential elements that compose the Introduction and Method chapters of the proposal are presented for two of the most frequent types of dissertations: the empirical study and the systematic review of the literature. Students pursuing a dissertation other than an empirical study or systematic literature review should consult closely with their Committee Chair for the organizational format specific to the type of dissertation they are undertaking.

**INTRODUCTION AND METHOD FOR AN EMPIRICAL STUDY** (includes group experiments, quasi-experimental designs, correlational studies, program evaluation, survey research, needs assessment, and qualitative research)

### CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

Principal purposes of the Introduction include situating your study in its broad topical context, making a scholarly case for the specific study you are proposing, communicating the specific purpose(s) of your study, and presenting your hypotheses as to predicted results. Achieving these aims requires that you:

- a.) identify the broad topical context of the question, problem, or issue to be investigated;
- b.) present your critical review of the literature, which entails a synthesized review of existing theory and research of particular relevance to your study, as well as critical analysis of this literature, which characteristically entails identifying gaps in knowledge (as reflected in what the literature tells us and *has not yet* told us) which provide the reasons and bases for your specific study

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- c.) state the purpose(s) of your study by articulating a clear, explicit, and detailed description of the specific research question(s), problem(s), or issue(s) that the study is intended to investigate;
- d.) indicate the significance of the study, which entails explaining the value of the research investigation you will be conducting and the contributions it will make to the field of professional psychology;
- e.) if applicable to the nature of your specific empirical investigation, present the study's specific research hypotheses; alternatively—for example, in the case of survey research and qualitative research—present the specific research questions to be addressed

In presenting this material, a useful strategy to consider is using a “funnel” approach, in which one begins by presenting a broad introduction to the area of research in which one's study is situated, and then progressively narrowing the topic as one develops the rationale for, and ultimately arrives at explicitly describing, their specific study. With regard to the literature review, your committee Chair and/or other members of your committee may have input into the extent of the review, but *every effort should be made to include the most recent theoretical, clinical, and empirical literature bearing on the question, problem, or issue you will be investigating*. Historic literature should be included to the extent that it is directly relevant. Students are strongly advised to read pp. 27-28 of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (6<sup>th</sup> ed.) for additional information and detail regarding the Introduction section.

## CHAPTER II. METHOD

The Method section provides a description of precisely how the study's hypotheses will be tested or (e.g., in the case of other forms of empirical research) precisely how the guiding research questions will be answered. *It should be explicit enough that a reader could reasonably replicate your proposed study by using the Method's subsections as a guide*. Some aspects of the procedure may need to be altered or developed as the study proceeds, but the description of the procedure should be as specific as possible at this time. The student is strongly advised to read pp. 29-32 of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (6<sup>th</sup> ed.), which describes and explains in detail the specific subsections of the Method section for an empirical study. Some departures from this format (e.g., adaptations or additions) may be warranted depending on the nature of your study, but this should be discussed with your committee Chair. At minimum, the following subsections (and examples of the types of information presented in each) should be included in the Method section of an empirical dissertation:

**Research Design:** Indicate the specific type of research design you will be using for your study (e.g., an experimental groups design; a quasi-experimental design; if a qualitative study, the specific type of qualitative approach you will be using; etc.), briefly explain essential features of this type of design to the reader, and provide the rationale for using this particular research design to address the question(s), problem(s), or issue(s) you are addressing in your study.

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**Participants:** Include the source(s)/setting(s) from which participants will be selected; how they will be selected (including, if relevant, selection criteria); the number of participants who will take part in the study (i.e., sample size); and aspirations regarding relevant descriptive demographic characteristics of the sample (e.g., desired age range; gender; etc.), especially those that may bear on the study's results;

**Measures (or Instrumentation):** Identify and describe all measures that you plan to use in the study; a frequently-used format for doing this entails identifying the specific constructs of interest in your study (e.g. anxiety, relationship satisfaction, aggression) and, for each construct, indicating and describing the measurement instrument(s) you will be using to operationally define that construct, along with appropriate and sufficient reliability and validity data on each given measure;

**Procedure:** Describe in detail the exact steps involved in how you will carry out the study; how informed consent will be obtained; if a clinical intervention is used, provide a detailed description of its components, and if interventions are to be implemented over a series of sessions, provide a detailed indication of the content, including intervention(s) planned, for each session; if a program is being evaluated, provide a detailed description of the program's components; indicate when you will be collecting data, for example, the time point(s) at which participants will—depending on the type of research—complete measurement instruments, be interviewed, and so forth.

**Data Analysis:** Indicate how you will analyze the data—for example, in the case of a group experiment, specify the statistical analyses that you plan to use to test each hypothesis; in the case of a quasi-experimental design, correlational study, program evaluation, survey research, or needs assessment, indicate the statistical procedures you will apply to the data to answer the study's research questions; in the case of qualitative research, describe the procedures that will be used to analyze and interpret the qualitative data to be collected

## **INTRODUCTION AND METHOD FOR A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

### **CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION**

The purposes of the Introduction are to identify the topic of your systematic review of the literature, provide the rationale for your topic, and communicate the specific goals of your review. To achieve these aims, it is characteristically important to:

- a.) present the topic of your review and impart essential pertinent knowledge about each of the subtopics which, through their interconnectedness, comprise the review's topic. The length of this material can vary considerably, depending on the particular information (e.g., concepts, theory, and/or

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empirical findings) that in your judgment and/or that of your committee needs to be conveyed about each subtopic to create for the reader a cohesive context of knowledge for understanding the review's topic and goals;

- b.) state the overall purpose of the review;
- c.) establish why a systematic review of the literature on this topic is necessary and important
- d.) translate your statement of the review's overall purpose into delineation of the specific goals of the review. These goals can be communicated in various ways, for example by presenting the specific questions your review will be addressing, or by stating each of the objectives the review is intended to achieve.
- e.) explicitly define key terms if you have reason to believe particular concepts or terminology central to your dissertation may not be familiar to readers, if in the literature there are conflicting definitions of certain key terms, and/or if a given term has a specific meaning in the context of your project; in these cases, providing your definition of selected key terms is intended to facilitate a shared understanding of such terms between you and the reader

While there is flexibility in the precise format (e.g., sequencing) for presenting these and any other content elements deemed by you and/or your committee to be appropriate to introducing your topic, it is essential that there be a logical flow between ideas as you present them over the course of the Introduction.

## **CHAPTER II: METHOD**

The Method section should be devoted to elaborating one's specific plan of action both for how one will gather the specific data (i.e., theoretical writings and/or research investigations) to be targeted in the systematic literature review, and for how one plans to structure and organize their written review, evaluation, and critique of this literature.

Among options, this section can begin with a restatement of the purpose of the dissertation and by providing a brief overview of what will be presented in this section of the proposal. At minimum, the following subsections should be provided in the Method section—although one may describe additional facets of their method (e.g., if one plans to use a systematic procedure used for recording the results of their review and critique of each article) if it is judged that this additional material can enhance the reader's understanding of your plan for carrying out your systematic literature review.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

**Databases, keywords, and additional sources:** Describe how the literature relevant to your systematic review will be gathered; this entails:

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Identifying specific databases that have been and/or will be used;

Indicating key words used in searching databases;

Additional strategies you plan to use to identify relevant literature (e.g., examining Reference sections of articles for pertinent materials; recommendations of chapters and articles by your Chair and/or other committee members)

**Document Selection:** Describe the criteria that you used to select, from among all literature gathered, the specific articles, chapters, and so forth to be targeted in your systematic review. Selection criteria fall into two categories:

Inclusion Criteria, which entail specific criteria for *including* a study or article in the systematic review of the literature

Exclusion Criteria, which entail specific criteria for *excluding* a study or article from the systematic review of the literature

**PRISMA Flowchart:** Present a PRISMA flowchart that illustrates the process of systematically applying the inclusion and exclusion criteria to identify the final studies to be analyzed in the systematic review

**Strategy of Analysis:** Describe how you will structure your systematic review of the literature, which will constitute the Results chapter of your dissertation, and which in turn will influence elements of your Discussion chapter. This description of the structure should include an indication of the specific categories into which findings will be organized in the Results section; these categories should be logically consistent with the guiding research questions or objectives presented earlier. It is highly likely that some of the categories will need to be modified or developed as your systematic review of the literature proceeds, but in the proposal indicate as specifically as possible what *at this time* are the categories into which you plan to organize the review's findings. Indicate, as well, foci you currently plan to address in your Discussion section. Depending on the topic and specific objectives of the review, these proposed foci may include (a) explicitly summarizing and discussing the findings as they relate to each of the specific goals (objectives; questions) delineated in the Introduction, (b) offering methodological critique of the research (e.g., methodological issues and limitations in the research), (c) specifying implications and directions for future research, (d) discussing clinical implications of the findings, and (e) articulating limitations in your systematic literature review. As with the Results section, proposed foci for organizing the Discussion section may be modified when the latter is actually being written up. For example, in some systematic literature views, elements of methodological critique are better presented in the Results section in the course of presenting studies and their findings and then, in the Discussion section, summarizing these methodological issues to provide a

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context for discussing directions for future research. Ultimately, the structure and organization that you propose for your Results and Discussion sections depends on such considerations as the topic of your systematic literature review, the specific questions or objectives it is designed to address, and the nature of the literature itself. Your committee can play an instrumental and valuable role in helping you make these determinations.

## **FORMAT OF DISSERTATION PROPOSAL**

Regardless of the type of dissertation one proposes, the Introduction and Method chapters are preceded by front matter (i.e., a Title Page, the Table of Contents, and an Abstract) and followed by back matter (i.e., References and, if warranted, an Appendix). Thus, taken together, the different components that comprise the written dissertation proposal—and the order in which they should be arranged—is as follows (see Appendix C for a dissertation proposal template illustrating this sequencing):

### **TITLE PAGE**

### **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

### **ABSTRACT**

### **INTRODUCTION**

### **METHOD**

### **REFERENCES**

### **APPENDIX (if warranted)**

Certain features and/or considerations characterize each component of the front matter and back matter:

**TITLE PAGE:** The title page is the reader's first exposure to your dissertation and as such the title of your dissertation should be given very careful consideration. Seek to fashion a clear and appealing title that succinctly conveys the topic, scope, and purpose of your project. The dissertation title is characteristically 10-12 words maximum.

**TABLE OF CONTENTS:** The Table of Contents in essence provides the reader with an outline—a guiding roadmap—of what is to come. As such, its content should mirror the structural organization and sequencing of material presented in the pages to come. Specific chapter headings (i.e., Introduction and Method), sections within chapters, and subsections within sections are all explicitly delineated for the reader, along with other compositional elements of the proposal (e.g., Abstract, Reference section and, if applicable, Appendices). The page number on which each such compositional element starts is also indicated.

**ABSTRACT:** The Abstract concisely summarizes important elements of your proposal.

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For an empirical study, this includes crisply summarizing the topical context of your study and, within that context, the specific gap(s) in knowledge revealed by your review of the literature; in light of the identified gap(s), stating the purpose(s) of your study; summarizing your research questions or hypotheses; and summarizing essential aspects of your methodology. Along similar lines, the Abstract for a systematic review of the literature should concisely present the topic area that serves as context for your review, state both the specific focus and goals of the review (e.g., questions you plan to address or aims you plan to achieve), and summarize your methodology. Students are strongly advised to read pp. 25-27 of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (6<sup>th</sup> ed.) for additional information and detail regarding the Abstract.

**REFERENCES:** A reference list should be included, using the reference style described in the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (6<sup>th</sup> ed.). The Reference section should contain all references cited in the proposal, and all references in the Reference section should be cited in the proposal

**APPENDIX:** The Appendix should contain copies of all materials you will use in your study; this includes informed consent forms, any cover letter or instructions presented to participants, and copies of every measure you will use in your study (including measurement instruments described under Measures in the Method section, questionnaires designed to gather demographic information, survey instruments, interview questions, etc.). In a systematic review of the literature, an Appendix may be warranted if there are supplementary materials (e.g., if you developed a specific form for recording the results of your review, evaluation, and critique of each article) that in your judgment and/or the judgment of your committee will facilitate an understanding of your procedure. A preliminary table of findings is often included as an Appendix in literature review proposals.

### **FORMATTING, TYPING, AND ELEMENTS OF STYLE**

The 6<sup>th</sup> Edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* serves as the guide for formatting, typing, and style as the student prepares his or her written dissertation proposal for submission. If the student has any questions whatsoever about these matters that are not addressed below or in the *APA Manual*, he or she should consult with his or her dissertation Chair. Among key guidelines (some of which are distinct to dissertations and may deviate slightly from the APA format for articles) for preparing one's proposal are the following:

1. **Font:** Times New Roman 12-point font is to be used throughout the manuscript.
2. **Margins:** The margin on the left side of each page is 1 1/2 inches and 1 inch on the top, right, and bottom margins. Margins are to be aligned on the left and uneven (ragged) on the right.
3. **Pagination:** The Title Page and the first page of the Table of Contents are counted but not numbered; additional pages of the latter are numbered. Numbering of front matter is done in lower case Roman numeral, such that, if the Table of Contents is only one page,

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the Abstract is assigned the lower case Roman numeral “iii” at the bottom center of the page; if the Abstract continues onto a second page, the latter is assigned the lower case Roman numeral “iv”(similarly placed at the bottom center of the page). The first page of the Introduction is page 1. Beginning with this page and continuing throughout the remainder of the manuscript, Arabic numbers (i.e., “1”, “2”, “3”, etc.) are used and placed at the upper right-hand corner of the page and flush with the right-hand margin. These pagination guidelines are usually easily implemented by using the Insert Page Number feature (or appropriate variant) in your Menu.

4. **Spacing:** The dissertation manuscript is double-spaced throughout, with the exception of the Title Page (see sample, p. 18 below), the Table of Contents, and the references. In the Table of Contents (see samples, p. 19 and p. 20, below), chapter headings (i.e., both the Introduction and the Method), as well as References and the first Appendix, are double-spaced. It is also important to note that the wording of all headings and subheadings in the Table of Contents should match exactly the wording used in the manuscript. In the Reference section, each entry is double spaced, with double-spacing between entries as well.

5. **Abstract:** The Abstract for a dissertation should be limited to no more than 350 words. The first sentence of the first paragraph is not indented, but rather is flush with the left-hand margin.

6. **Lengthy Quotations:** Referring to a quotation of 40 or more words, a lengthy quotation is set off from the text in a separate paragraph and is indented five (5) spaces from the left margin. Lengthy quotations are not placed in quotation marks. Single- or double-spacing may be used, but the chosen spacing must be maintained consistently throughout the manuscript for all lengthy quotations.

7. **Headings and Subheadings:** In the text of the manuscript, chapter headings are printed in capital letters and centered. The word “CHAPTER” is presented first, followed by a capital Roman numeral (without punctuation), and is then followed two (2) lines below by the title of the Chapter, which is also in capital letters (see sample on p. 21 at end of this document). Each new chapter begins on a new page. Within each chapter, headings and subheadings follow the format presented in the *APA Manual*; see pp. 62-63 for details. Neither the Reference section nor (each) Appendix is designated as a chapter, although each begins on a new page.

**Proofreading:** Before submitting his or her dissertation proposal to the committee Chair, the student *must* have proof read it *thoroughly*. While proof reading, the student should check that his or her dissertation:

- is consistent with the format described above and with correct APA format (e.g., re: font, margins, pagination, spacing, quotations, and headings and subheadings)
- has a Table of Contents with correct page numbers

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- has an Abstract
- has correct punctuation, grammar, and spelling
- has all correct references included and does not include extra references not cited in the manuscript

### **DEFENDING THE DISSERTATION PROPOSAL**

The dissertation proposal must be successfully defended in a proposal review meeting with the student's full dissertation committee present; due to APPIC deadlines and requirements, if you are intending to pursue an APPIC internship, this proposal defense should occur no later than October 1 of the year preceding the start of the student's predoctoral clinical internship. The aim of this process is to ensure that the student's dissertation project meets the standards of scholarship and scientific sophistication appropriate to earning a doctoral degree, and that he or she has a workable plan for completing the project. Invariably, the defended proposal involves some recommended changes by the committee. Once the student satisfactorily incorporates these changes into the revised proposal and one's committee Chair formally approves the latter, the dissertation proposal serves as an institutional agreement for the work that needs to be completed for approval of the final dissertation manuscript.

The following guidelines are to be observed in the proposal defense process:

1. The student must submit his or her completed proposal to his or her dissertation Chair. At her or his discretion, the Chair may have the student distribute this penultimate draft to all dissertation committee members for their review and feedback. The Chair must approve the penultimate draft before the student distributes it to the committee for the oral defense.
2. Subsequent to this approval, the student is responsible for contacting the other members of his or her committee, coordinating a date and time for the oral defense, and reserving a room for the meeting. The proposal defense should be scheduled for a two hour block of time. Once the date, time, and location are established, the student must submit a hard copy and an electronic copy of the proposal manuscript to each member of his or her committee members at least 10 days prior to the defense date.
3. During the first 20-30 minutes of the oral defense meeting, the student will provide a concise presentation of his or her proposed dissertation project. The presentation, which may be facilitated with PowerPoint or handouts, should highlight:
  - the specific topic of the student's empirical study or systematic literature review and the overall aim(s) or purpose(s) of his or her project;

[Type here]

- the background and context of the student’s topic through reviewing key elements of what scholars have thus far come to understand and know about this area, based on theory and/or research up to this point
- what we don’t yet understand or know about this area—that is, significant gap(s) in our knowledge and understanding
- in light of these key gaps in knowledge and understanding, the specific research question(s)—in an empirical study—the student will be attempting to answer and, if relevant, the specific research hypotheses; or—in a systematic review of the literature—the specific goals/objectives the student intends to achieve
- the importance of answering these questions or achieving these objectives, that is, the contributions this heightened knowledge and understanding can make to professional psychology
- the project’s methodology (i.e., how the student proposes to go about conducting his or her project); for example,
  - in the case of an empirical study, describing one’s research design and the rationale for this design; pertinent information about the study’s participants; description of one’s measures and procedures; and planned data analyses for answering one’s research questions and/or testing his or her hypotheses
  - in the case of a systematic review of the literature, a description of how articles were gathered for one’s literature review, including a sampling of key search terms; inclusion and exclusion criteria to be used for selecting the specific articles to be targeted by one’s literature review; if relevant, description of the particular format used for recording findings from one’s systematic review of each article; and one’s planned strategy for analyzing the data (i.e., the categories one plans to use in their Results and Discussion sections for structuring and organizing presentation of their review, evaluation, and critique of the literature)
- the student should also be prepared to identify and discuss limitations of their study or systematic literature review, as well as any other key issues associated with their dissertation proposal

4. When the student has completed the presentation, the committee chair will open the floor to questions. The latter may focus on any aspects of the student’s oral presentation and written dissertation proposal; during the period of questioning, the Chair may intercede to clarify questions from other dissertation committee members presented to the student.

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5. When the questioning period has been completed, the student will be excused from the room to allow the committee to discuss and reach a consensus on the outcome of the oral defense. After this consensus has been reached, the student will be invited back into the room and the committee Chair will share with him or her the committee's outcome decision. There are three possible outcomes of the oral defense meeting:

- a.) **Pass Without Revisions:** If the student passes the proposal defense without any revisions required, the Chair will sign the Dissertation Proposal Defense Form (see Appendix D) before the meeting is brought to a close. If the dissertation entails an empirical study, the student may also now proceed with processes necessary for submitting his or her proposal to Medaille's Institutional Review Board (IRB)
- b.) **Pass With Revisions:** An outcome decision of Pass With Revisions indicates that the student's dissertation committee generally appraised his or her dissertation and oral defense positively, but that they also determined that some changes need to be made in selected parts of the written proposal and/or in the methodology before final approval of the proposal can be provided. Specific required revisions will be indicated on page 2 of the Dissertation Proposal Defense Form. The student and dissertation Chair will schedule an appointment to discuss the required revisions and the time frame for instituting the former in the written proposal. When the student has completed writing the revised proposal, he or she will submit this to his or her Chair. The latter's review and approval of the revised proposal is sufficient for the outcome to be changed to Pass Without Revisions, although the Chair may consult with other committee members on the revised proposal before reaching a final decision. If it is assessed that all required revisions have been satisfactorily incorporated, the Chair will modify the status of the student's proposal to Pass Without Revisions and will indicate this change on the Dissertation Proposal Revision Form (see Appendix E). If the revision is appraised as not yet satisfactory, additional specified revisions will be required until such time as the student receives from his or her Chair a Pass Without Revisions. When this outcome has been achieved, the student may proceed with the IRB process if his or her project involves an empirical study.
- c.) **Fail:** An outcome decision of Fail indicates that the committee has assessed that major work remains to be done on the dissertation proposal, and that another proposal defense meeting will need to be held with all members of the committee present. Specific required revisions will be indicated on page 2 of the Dissertation Proposal Defense Form. In certain cases, a change of topic, Chair, and/or committee member composition may be necessary. The student and dissertation Chair will schedule an appointment to discuss the required revisions and time frame for instituting the former in the written

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proposal. When the student has completed writing the revised proposal, he or she will submit this to his or her Chair. The latter's review and approval of the revised proposal is sufficient for the outcome to be changed to Pass Without Revisions, although the Chair may consult with other committee members on the revised proposal before reaching a final decision. If it is assessed that all required revisions have been satisfactorily incorporated, the Chair will modify the status of the student's proposal to Pass Without Revisions and will indicate this change on the Dissertation Proposal Revision Form (Appendix E). If the revision is appraised as not yet satisfactory, additional specified revisions will be required until such time as the student receives from his or her Chair a Pass Without Revisions. When this outcome has been achieved, the student may proceed with scheduling the second proposal defense meeting.

### **APPROVAL BY THE INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB)**

If the dissertation project entails empirical research, the student, subsequent to securing final approval of the dissertation proposal from one's Chair, must submit an application to Medaille College's IRB for review of the proposed research. Exemplars of dissertation projects requiring IRB approval are quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods research, review and analysis of existing data (e.g., use of archival data), program evaluation, needs assessment, and case studies. See <http://www.medaille.edu/institutional-review-board> for all IRB policies and procedures. In the event that modifications in the research are required by the IRB, the student is responsible for informing all members of her or his committee of IRB-required changes and for obtaining verification that committee members have been notified of these changes. Data collection may begin only after a student has received final approval from the IRB.

Following a successful proposal defense and IRB approval, the student may begin the research, incorporating any modifications that have resulted from the defense and/or required by the IRB. It is important that the student follows proposed procedures to the extent possible. In the event that procedures must be modified, such changes should be cleared with the student's committee in order to avoid problems with the final defense.

If a student's dissertation project does not entail collecting original data from research participants nor reviewing and analyzing existing data, the student, following successful defense of the proposal, does not need to submit an application to Medaille's IRB and can directly proceed into implementing her or his project. Systematic literature reviews, theoretical studies, quantitative and qualitative meta-analyses, design of an innovative program, and examinations of the relationship between psychology and public policy are exemplars of dissertation projects that do not require IRB approval.

### **IMPLEMENTING THE DISSERTATION PROJECT**

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In this phase, students who are undertaking an empirical research project will begin the data collection process in accord with the research methodology delineated in the Method section of their proposal in its final approved form and incorporating any changes required by the IRB. Students are advised to keep their committee Chair informed of progress throughout the data collection process and to discuss any unforeseen developments that may occur as the data collection process unfolds. Upon completion of all data collection, the student may proceed to the data analysis stage of the study, using the data analysis procedures identified in the proposal's Method chapter for answering the study's guiding research questions. During the process of data analysis, it is expected that the student will consult, as needed, with members of their committee whose expertise includes methods of data analysis appropriate to the research questions targeted by the study.

Students whose dissertation entails a systematic literature review or other form of non-empirical project will, in this phase, read and critically evaluate each of the empirical studies, theoretical articles, and other material selected as relevant for answering the specific questions that the systematic literature review is intended to address.

## **ORGANIZING AND WRITING THE DISSERTATION**

The organization of the completed dissertation manuscript distributed to all Committee members in advance of the oral defense meeting follows the same format as that presented for the dissertation proposal (pp. 14-15, above), but with additional components added. Taken together, these components and their order is as follows (see Appendix F for a template illustrating this sequencing):

**TITLE PAGE**

**DISSERTATION APPROVAL SHEET**

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

**LIST OF TABLES**

**LIST OF FIGURES**

**DEDICATION (optional)**

**ACKNOWLEDGMENTS (optional)**

**ABSTRACT**

**INTRODUCTION**

**METHOD**

**RESULTS**

[Type here]

**DISCUSSION****REFERENCES****TABLES****FIGURES****APPENDICES**

Those components listed above that also appeared in the dissertation proposal document are modified in specific ways for the completed dissertation manuscript. These changes are noted here, along with a description of features and/or considerations characterizing each of the additional components specific to the completed document:

**TITLE PAGE:** The phrase “A Dissertation Proposal Submitted...” should be changed to “A Dissertation Submitted...”, and the date at the bottom of the page should be updated to accord with the month and year of the final dissertation defense.

**DISSERTATION APPROVAL SHEET:** In the manuscript distributed to all Committee Members prior to the defense meeting, the Dissertation Approval Sheet is entered immediately after the Title Page (see Appendix F). The Committee Chair enters the date of the defense meeting; specific guidelines regarding signatures by the Committee Chair and other members are presented below in the context of the three different possible outcomes of the meeting.

**TABLE OF CONTENTS:** The Table of Contents follows the format described for the dissertation proposal, but expands to include additional material that now appears in the final dissertation manuscript. This includes the Dissertation Approval Sheet, List of Tables and List of Figures, Dedication and Acknowledgements (if the student chooses to include either or both of these optional elements), additional chapter headings (i.e., Results and Discussion) and their respective sections and subsections within sections, and Appendices (if warranted). The title and the page number of each Appendix should be listed. Appendix F provides two illustrative, prototypic Tables of Contents, one for an empirical study and the other for a systematic review of the literature.

**LIST OF TABLES.** This page lists all Tables presented in the dissertation, with double-spacing used to separate each Table listed. Each Table is also enumerated, followed by indicating the full title of the Table and the specific page on which it appears. Appendix F presents an illustration of a List of Tables page that appears in the front matter.

**LIST OF FIGURES.** This page follows the List of Tables page and lists, with double-spacing between each, all Figures that may be presented in the dissertation. Similar to Tables, each Figure is enumerated, followed by indicating the full title of the Figures and the specific page on which it appears. Appendix F presents an illustration of the List of Figures page.

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**DEDICATION (optional):** The dedication page is used to honor a particularly special person, set of persons, or organization to whom the student wishes to express gratitude for their especially meaningful contribution(s) to conducting and completing the dissertation project. The text of the dedication is located four lines under the centered word “Dedication,” and the page on which it appears is not numbered.

**ACKNOWLEDGMENTS (optional):** The Acknowledgments page is used to express recognition of and appreciation to any individuals (e.g., family members, friends, administrators, faculty) who have been helpful to the student in the course of carrying out and completing any aspect of the dissertation project. This help can take numerous forms including, though certainly not limited to, academic direction and/or advisement, guidance, insight, emotional support, and encouragement.

**ABSTRACT:** The Abstract, which must be limited to 350 words, presents a summary of the student’s dissertation. For both an empirical study and a systematic literature review, this entails not only a consolidated version of the essential elements described above for the dissertation proposal’s Abstract, but also a well thought-out summary of the project’s major findings and their essential implications.

**INTRODUCTION:** The Introduction for the final dissertation may include some revisions relative to the Introduction written for the dissertation proposal. It is expected, however, that any such changes will not dramatically alter the substance of the Introduction, but rather will entail additions of material (e.g., additional literature published since the proposal defense) in keeping with the themes of the proposal’s Introduction.

**METHOD:** For the final dissertation, the Method presented in the dissertation proposal is converted to past tense. In addition, if, in consultation with the Committee Chair, any changes in methodology proved necessary in the course of actually implementing the project, these are incorporated into the final dissertation’s Method chapter.

**RESULTS:** In the Results chapter the student provides a well-organized presentation of the project’s specific findings. In an empirical study, the order in which these findings are presented parallels the order with which each specific research question and/or hypothesis has been stated in the Introduction. For each research question addressed and/or hypothesis tested, the specific descriptive and/or inferential statistical procedures(s) used to treat the data and the resultant quantitative findings yielded are reported in clear fashion. The student is encouraged to use Tables and/or Figures to supplement the presentation of findings. In a systematic review of the literature, the organizational structure for presenting findings from and evaluation of specific studies reviewed should accord with the specific aims of the review (i.e., the specific questions the systematic review was intended to answer, or specific objectives it was intended to achieve, per the last section of the Introduction). As studies are discussed (e.g., presentation of findings and critique), it is important that there be a logical flow from one study to the next within each section.

**DISCUSSION:** In this chapter the student provides a thoughtful, comprehensive, well-

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integrated discussion of the findings. The chapter characteristically begins with a brief summary of the purposes of the study or systematic literature review, followed by the student's interpretation of the results. This is a process in which one discusses the meanings and significance of the findings presented in the Results chapter, an essential element of which is integrating the dissertation's findings with previous theory and research as presented in the Introduction. This may include, but not be limited to, comparing and contrasting the dissertation's findings with the findings of previous work, culling out in the process consistencies and inconsistencies between the former and the latter, and offering explanations for identified differences. Additional essential components of this chapter include discussion of clinical implications of the findings and implications for future research. It is important, too, to specify strengths and limitations of the project one has conducted. A conclusions section often brings the Discussion chapter to an effective close; in this space, one presents, in brief fashion, their concluding reflective summation of the most critical core takeaways of the project (for example, aspects of the methodology, key results and findings, and critical clinical and/or research implications).

**REFERENCES:** It is very likely that, by virtue of changes that may have been incorporated into the final dissertation's Introduction and/or pertinent literature brought into the Discussion chapter, additional references will need to be added to the Reference chapter of the final dissertation manuscript. In addition, in a systematic literature review the Reference section will be significantly expanded by virtue of the array of literature presented and analyzed in the Results chapter.

**TABLES:** All Tables alluded to in the text (e.g., "see Table 3") are presented, in order, in the pages following the end of the Reference section. Thus, Table 1 would be the first page after the Reference section ends, followed on a separate page containing Table 2, and so on (See Appendix F). Please see the *APA Publication Manual* for guidelines indicating how Tables are to be presented (e.g., formatting, titling/captioning, and so forth).

**FIGURES:** Figures that have been alluded to in the text are presented following the presentation of Tables, with Figure 1 being the next page after the last Table page. Ensuing Figures are presented in order, with each Figure being placed on a separate page. Please see the *APA Publication Manual* for guidelines indicating how Figures are to be presented (e.g., formatting, titling/captioning, and so forth).

For any copyrighted Tables or Figures that are used (drawn, for example, from books or journal articles), it is necessary to obtain written permission from the copyright source and to indicate at the end of the Title or Figure that permission has been provided.

**APPENDICES:** This section includes all additional materials that have been instrumental to carrying out the dissertation project and which can facilitate replication by another scholar. Examples include consent forms, copies of measures, standardized instructions provided to research participants, and correspondence (e.g., letters for recruiting participants). Each Appendix is presented as a separate page, labeled at the top with the centered word "Appendix" followed by consecutive lettering (starting with "A"),

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a colon, and then the title of the Appendix—for example “Appendix B: Consent Form Signed by Research Participants”. Each Appendix, its title, and its page number within the document should be listed in the Table of Contents.

### **FORMATTING, TYPING, AND ELEMENTS OF STYLE**

The same parameters used to guide formatting, typing, and elements of style in preparing the dissertation proposal (see pp. 16-17, above) are applied in preparing the final dissertation manuscript. It is therefore critical that the student maintain consistency in applying these parameters not only as she or he institutes possible revisions in chapters and sections previously prepared for the proposal, but also when typing the Results and Discussion chapters to be added to the final manuscript. The following are additional guidelines for preparing the final dissertation:

- count, but do not paginate, the Title Page, Dissertation Approval Sheet, and first page of the Table of Contents; if the Table of Contents extends onto a second page, pagination begins with that page, using a lowercase Roman numeral (e.g., “iv.”). All succeeding front matter items (i.e., List of Tables, List of Figures, Dedication, Acknowledgements, and Abstract) are similarly numbered with lowercase Roman numerals.

- as in the dissertation proposal, the first page of the final dissertation’s Introduction is numbered in Arabic as page 1, with Arabic numbers (i.e., “2”, “3”, “4”, etc.) continuing to be used throughout all ensuing pages of the document (including Tables, Figures, and Appendices)

The 6<sup>th</sup> Edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* and your Committee Chair should continue to be consulted if questions arise about any aspect of formatting, typing, or elements of style.

### **DISSERTATION ORAL DEFENSE MEETING**

Once the Dissertation Chair is satisfied with a student’s final dissertation manuscript, the Dissertation Chair will inform the student that he/she may move ahead with the final defense. The overarching purpose of the dissertation defense is to provide the student with an opportunity to demonstrate scholarly mastery of their dissertation project and manuscript. The Committee Chair has the final responsibility for approving arrangement of this oral defense meeting, which is to be scheduled for a two-hour time block. Pursuant to the Chair’s permission, the student will contact members of the Committee, gather their available dates for the defense meeting, and based on this information schedule the date, time, and location for the defense, with the Chair facilitating this process as appropriate. After the date, time, and location of the defense meeting have been established, the student must submit both an electronic copy and a hard copy of the dissertation manuscript to each member of the Committee a minimum of 2 weeks prior to the defense. Medaille administrators, full-time and adjunct faculty, staff, and students are welcome to attend the defense. As such, after the student has distributed her/his dissertation manuscript to all members of the Committee, the Chair will send an

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email to the Medaille community announcing and inviting attendance to the defense meeting.

The Committee Chair will start the defense meeting with opening remarks, including welcoming members of the Medaille community in attendance, introducing the student and each member of the dissertation Committee, and stating the agenda for the meeting. The ensuing process will consist of four parts: the student's presentation of her/his dissertation, the Committee's questioning of the student, the Committee's determination of the outcome of the dissertation, and providing feedback to the student.

### **Oral Presentation**

In the first part of the meeting, the student will provide an approximately 30-minute presentation of her/his dissertation project. The different components of this presentation are delineated momentarily, but it is important to note that particular emphasis should be placed on presenting the results of one's project and discussing their implications. Consequently, in preparing one's presentation, it is recommended that the material preceding the results and discussion be presented in as concise a fashion as possible—that is, sufficient to create the background and context necessary for meaningful presentation and discussion of the project's findings. Bearing these considerations in mind, in her/his oral presentation—which may be facilitated with PowerPoint slides and/or slides—the student should:

- state the specific topic of the project and its overall aim(s) or purposes
- highlight—based on the theoretical and/or empirical literature review comprising the dissertation's Introduction chapter—the *essential* knowledge and understanding that scholars have thus far attained relative to the topic of one's project (in essence, the most salient elements of what we currently *do* know and understand relative to the project's topical focus)
- specify the particular significant gap(s) in this knowledge and understanding that provide the context (i.e., rationale) for one's project (in essence, salient elements of what we *don't* yet know and understand relative to the dissertation's topic and which serve as the focal basis for one's project)
- in light of these key gaps in knowledge and understanding, clearly articulate—for an empirical study—the *specific* research question(s) the dissertation project was intended to answer and, if relevant specific research hypotheses;) or—for a systematic literature review—indicate the *specific* goals of the project (e.g., the specific questions the systematic review of the literature is intended to answer or the specific objectives the review was intended to achieve)
- indicate why it is important to examine the specific questions the project is designed to address

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- describe key features of the project's methodology
  - in the case of an empirical study, indicate one's research design and the rationale for this design; pertinent information about the study's participants; description of one's measures and procedures; additional information key to the study's methodology
  - in the case of a systematic review of the literature, a brief description of how articles were gathered for one's literature review, including a sampling of key search terms; criteria used for selecting specific articles targeted by one's systematic literature review and the number of articles ultimately selected for systematic review; the strategy used in undertaking the systematic review of articles (e.g., identifying the central question(s) or issue(s) being investigated by a given study; if relevant, crystallizing the theoretical framework of a given study; extracting out the key findings; critiquing methodology)
- communicate the project's major results:
  - in the case of an empirical study, the student should succinctly present the findings as they relate to each of the study's specific research question(s), and as relevant, each hypothesis that was tested; this systematic presentation of the results should also include an indication of the specific statistical analyses used in deriving each set of findings
  - in the case of a systematic review of the literature, the major findings emerging from one's review should be organized and presented as they relate to each of the specific questions the review was intended to answer and/or specific goals the review was intended to achieve
- discuss the findings and their implications; this includes, but may not be limited to:
  - integrating your findings with what is currently known and understood about the topic under study (e.g., what do the findings add to this knowledge and understanding? How do your findings modify or augment current knowledge and understanding? What are their implications for theoretical conceptualization in this topic area?)
  - presenting clinical implications of the findings (e.g., depending on the topic of your project, implications for assessing and understanding pertinent psychological disorders; implications for advancing particular

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facets of psychotherapy, for example in the realm of intervention and technique and/or clinical processes; implications for clinical training)

- specifying implications for future research in the topic under investigation (e.g., based on the knowledge and understanding you have developed in this topic area and the integration of your findings into this body of knowledge, what directions for future research do you believe to be of particular importance and why? What are your recommendations for improving the methodology of research on this topic?)
- indicate strengths and limitations of your study or systematic literature review

### **Oral Examination**

When the student has completed the oral presentation of her/his dissertation project, the second part of the defense meeting will begin. During this phase, members of the dissertation Committee will undertake formal questioning of the student. Questions may focus on any aspect of the dissertation, and thus they may include, but not necessarily be limited to, further inquiry into the purpose of and specific questions addressed by the project, the literature which serves as context for the dissertation, methodology, specific findings, the interpretation of particular findings, and implications of the findings for theory, research, practice, and/or training in the topic area on which the dissertation is focused. Broader questions that intersect with the topic of the dissertation but that may not fall within its immediate scope may also be asked. Throughout the oral examination and discussion process, the Chair will maintain a written record of revisions that may requested by the Committee. This phase of questioning and discussion will come to a conclusion when the student has addressed all questions, concerns, and issues raised by the Committee.

### **Committee's Determination of Outcome**

When this second part of the defense meeting has been brought to a close, the Chair will ask the student and all guests in attendance to leave the room in order that the Committee members may deliberate and reach a consensus about the outcome of the student's dissertation oral defense. These deliberations will take into account both the just-completed oral defense and the written dissertation document; the Chair will record on the Required Revisions to the Final Dissertation Manuscript form (see Appendix G) required revisions that emerge in the course of the Committee's deliberations. The Committee's evaluation of the student's final dissertation will also be formalized through completion of the Dissertation/Research Skills Rubric (see Appendix H). There are three possible outcome decisions:

- Pass without revisions: This outcome indicates that the student has passed the oral defense and that no revisions are required in the dissertation manuscript distributed to the Committee prior to the defense meeting. In the event of this outcome, which tends to be rare, all members of the Committee will sign under "Approved" on the Dissertation Approval Sheet, and on the final line of this form, the Committee Chair will indicate the

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date of the defense meeting as the “Date of Final Approval” and affix her or his signature to the right of this line.

- **Pass with revisions:** This outcome indicates that the student has passed the oral defense, but that, based on questioning and discussion during the defense’s oral examination phase, specific revisions are required in the dissertation manuscript. In the event of this outcome, all members of the Committee will sign under “Approved” on the Dissertation Approval Sheet, but the Chair will withhold dating and signing the Final Approval line on the Dissertation Approval Sheet. It will be the student’s subsequent responsibility to arrange a meeting with the dissertation Chair, during which the required revisions will be discussed and a time frame for their implementation will be established. When in the Chair’s judgment all revisions have been satisfactorily incorporated into the dissertation manuscript and no further changes are needed, she/he will provide final approval of the dissertation, and accordingly will sign and date the final line of the Dissertation Approval Sheet. In the course of judging the suitability of the revised manuscript for final approval, the Chair, at her/his discretion, may share the manuscript with other members of the Committee and obtain their input on the adequacy of the revisions before rendering her/his decision.

- **Fail:** This outcome indicates that the student has not satisfactorily defended her/his dissertation, and that both major revisions in the dissertation manuscript are required and another oral defense meeting with the Committee will need to be scheduled. In the event of this outcome, all members of the Committee will withhold signing the Dissertation Approval Sheet. As in the case of “Pass with revisions,” the student will be responsible for arrange a meeting with the dissertation Chair, during which the required revisions will be discussed and a time frame for their implementation will be established. If in the judgment of the Committee there is also a need for remediation prior to and/or in the course of implementing revisions in the dissertation, the specifics of this process will also be discussed when the student and Committee Chair meet. A timeframe for revising the dissertation manuscript, and if relevant, for implementing and completing the remedial plan, will also be established. The student will not be able to schedule a second dissertation defense meeting until the Chair and all members of the Committee have read the revised manuscript, consensually judge that improvements in the dissertation are at a level warranting a second defense meeting, and if pertinent to the situation at hand, remedial work has been completed. If the outcome of the second defense meeting is “Pass without revisions” or “Pass with revisions,” the respective procedures delineated above under each of these categories will be followed.

### **Feedback to Student**

After the Committee has determined the outcome of the dissertation defense, the student is invited back into the room and informed of the outcome decision in conjunction with appropriate feedback. The Committee Chair takes the lead in providing this feedback, but other Committee members should also feel free to provide input to the student throughout this feedback process. The Chair also communicates to the student the next steps she/he is to take in moving the dissertation process forward in accordance

[Type here]

with the specific outcome decision that has been rendered. If revisions are required, a copy of the Required Revisions to the Final Dissertation Manuscript form will be provided to the student after the oral defense meeting has concluded.

### **ADDITIONAL STEPS NECESSARY FOR CONFERRAL OF THE PSY.D. DEGREE IN CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY**

After the Committee Chair has given final approval to the dissertation and, accordingly, has signed and dated the final line of the Dissertation Approval Sheet, several additional steps are necessary before the student can be officially conferred the Psy.D. degree in clinical psychology by Medaille College. These steps are as follows:

1. The approved dissertation manuscript will be reviewed for grammar, punctuation, formatting, and APA style, and when all necessary revisions have been implemented, this revised manuscript will serve as the final, to-be-bound version of the student's clinical dissertation.
2. The Committee Chair will email the student notifying her or him that the dissertation is ready for binding and in this email will also provide the student with a Word copy of the final dissertation manuscript. The Chair will also provide the student the original, fully signed Dissertation Approval Sheet.
3. The student will make a color copy of the original Dissertation Approval Sheet, scan in this copy, insert the scanned-in copy as the second page (i.e., after the Title page) of the final-dissertation Word document, and convert the complete dissertation manuscript into a PDF file. A copy of this PDF file is to be emailed by the student to the PsyD Program Director, with the Department Administrative Assistant and the Dissertation Chair CC'ed on this email.
4. The student is also required to make arrangements for two hardbound copies of the final dissertation. One copy must contain the original fully signed Dissertation Approval Sheet, while the second hardbound copy is required to contain a color copy of the latter. It is customary, but not required, that the student also have two additional hardbound copies made, one for her or himself, and one for her or his Dissertation Chair.

After receiving back the hardbound copies of her or his dissertation, the student will submit the hardbound copy containing the original Dissertation Approval Sheet to the Department Administrative Assistant, who will place this copy in the Department's library. The student will email the PsyD Program Director and the Committee Chair to inform them that this hardbound copy has been submitted to the Department. The student will distribute the second hardbound copy of the dissertation to the Medaille College Buffalo-campus library, and will have the appropriate library staff complete the Library Hardbound Copy Verification Sheet (see Appendix I) verifying receipt of this hardbound copy. The student is responsible for returning this original signed verification sheet to the Department Administrative Assistant and submitting a copy to the Committee Chair. The library will upload a copy of the student's dissertation to the *ProQuest Dissertations*

[Type here]

*and Theses Database* and will notify the Committee Chair upon implementation of this step.

After the Chair receives the PDF file of the final dissertation and the two hardbound copies have been submitted by the student, the Chair will change all Incomplete (“I”) Clinical Dissertation grades (i.e., for PSY 851, Dissertation II; PSY 852, Dissertation III, and PSY 853, Dissertation Extended) to Satisfactory (“S”).

5. After the student completes steps 3 and 4 above, completion of all other remaining degree requirements and the submission of formal application required by the Registrar’s Office are required for conferral of the PsyD degree. The final deadline by which this application must be submitted is set by the Registrar’s Office and the State Department of Education and differs depending on whether the student is applying for May, August, or December degree conferral. It is the student’s responsibility to know the appropriate deadline dates for each of these three conferral months. Once the application has been submitted, the Registrar’s office will verify that all requirements for the degree have been met.

#### Appendix A: Flowchart of Dissertation Process

[Type here]



Appendix B: Dissertation Committee Form

[Type here]

**Medaille College  
PsyD Program in Clinical Psychology**

**DISSERTATION COMMITTEE FORM**

*Students should submit this completed form to the PsyD Program's Dissertation Coordinator, and a copy of the completed form both to their dissertation committee Chair and to the Administrative Assistant of the Department of Counseling and Clinical Psychology. The dissertation committee must be established in consultation with the student's dissertation Chair. The PsyD Program requires that a dissertation committee consist of at least three and no more than five members. The dissertation Chair must be a full-time member of the faculty of Medaille College; in the event that she or he is not a member of the PsyD Program's core faculty, at least one core-faculty member from the latter Program must serve on the Committee.*

Student name: \_\_\_\_\_

Tentative title of dissertation: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Student Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

The following faculty member has agreed to serve as the Chair of my dissertation committee:

Name and Terminal Degree: \_\_\_\_\_

Faculty signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

The following individuals have agreed to serve as members of my dissertation committee:

Name and Terminal Degree: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Institutional Affiliation: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name and Terminal Degree: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

[Type here]

Institutional Affiliation: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name and Terminal Degree: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Institutional Affiliation: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name and Terminal Degree: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Institutional Affiliation: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Approvals**

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature, PsyD Program Director) \_\_\_\_\_ (Date)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature, Vice President for Academic Affairs) \_\_\_\_\_ (Date)

TITLE OF YOUR CLINICAL DISSERTATION

by

Your Name

Dissertation Committee

Jane Doe, Psy.D., Chair

Paul Smith, Ph.D.

Amanda Jones, Ph.D.

A Dissertation Proposal

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PSYCHOLOGY

Department of Counseling and Clinical Psychology

Medaille College

Buffalo, NY 14214

Month, Year

[Sample Table of Contents for Empirical Study]

[Type here]

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
ABSTRACT.....	iii
CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
Heading.....	3
Subheading.....	3
Subheading.....	7
Subheading.....	10
Subheading.....	14
Heading.....	17
Subheading.....	18
Subheading.....	23
Subheading.....	27H
Heading.....	32
Subheading.....	32
Subheading.....	35
Subheading.....	37
CHAPTER II. METHOD.....	40
Research Design.....	40
Participants.....	43
Measures.....	46
Procedure.....	50
Data Analysis.....	54
REFERENCES.....	58
APPENDIX A: Explanation of Study for Participants.....	64
APPENDIX B: Participant Demographic Information Form.....	66
APPENDIX C: Participant Consent Form.....	66
APPENDIX D: Measure #1.....	67
APPENDIX E: Measure #2.....	68
APPENDIX F: Measure #3.....	70

[Sample Table of Contents for Systematic Review of Literature]

[Type here]

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
ABSTRACT.....	iii
CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
Heading.....	3
Subheading.....	3
Subheading.....	8
Subheading.....	12
Subheading.....	16
Heading.....	19
Subheading.....	20
Subheading.....	26
Subheading.....	29H
Heading.....	33
Subheading.....	33
Subheading.....	39
Subheading.....	43
CHAPTER II. METHOD.....	46
Data Collection Procedures.....	46
Databases and Keywords.....	47
Other Sources.....	48
Document Selection.....	49
Inclusion Criteria.....	49
Exclusion Criteria.....	50
Data Analysis Strategy.....	50
REFERENCES.....	54

Abstract

[Type here]

iii

[Sample Chapter Heading]

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## CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

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[Sample Chapter Heading]

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## CHAPTER II

## METHOD

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## REFERENCES

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Appendix D: Dissertation Proposal Defense Form

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**Medaille College  
PsyD Program in Clinical Psychology**

**DISSERTATION PROPOSAL DEFENSE FORM**

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Proposal Defense \_\_\_\_\_

Dissertation Title \_\_\_\_\_

1<sup>st</sup> Defense \_\_\_\_\_ 3<sup>rd</sup> Defense \_\_\_\_\_

2<sup>nd</sup> Defense \_\_\_\_\_ n<sup>th</sup> Defense \_\_\_\_\_

**DISSERTATION COMMITTEE**

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

Member: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature)

Member: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature)

Member: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature)

Member: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature)

**Dissertation Committee Decision for This Defense:**

\_\_\_\_\_ Pass Without Revisions

\_\_\_\_\_ Pass With Revisions [see required revisions below]

\_\_\_\_\_ Fail [see required revisions below]

**NOTE:** If the committee's decision has been other than Pass Without Revisions, the student and dissertation Chair will need to schedule an appointment to discuss the required revisions and the time frame both for incorporating the former into the written proposal and for resubmitting the revised draft.

**Required Revisions to the Dissertation Proposal**

[Type here]

Following are all Committee-required revisions to the proposal (use an additional sheet of paper as needed); when the student has completed the revised proposal, he or she will submit the latter to the committee Chair for further action:

**ABSTRACT**

**INTRODUCTION**

**METHOD**

**REFERENCES**

Dissertation Chair: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature)

Student: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature)

: Dissertation Proposal Revision Form

8/15

[Type here]

**Medaille College  
PsyD Program in Clinical Psychology**

**DISSERTATION PROPOSAL REVISION FORM**

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_

Dissertation Title \_\_\_\_\_

The dissertation Chair will select the appropriate option from those presented below:

**OPTION A:** I have read the revised dissertation proposal submitted by the above named student and have determined that all required revisions have been satisfactorily incorporated. Therefore,

\_\_\_\_\_ the status of the proposal is hereby changed from Pass With Revisions to Pass Without Revisions, and if the dissertation project is an empirical study, the student is authorized to proceed with processes necessary for submitting his or her proposal to Medaille College's Institutional Review Board (IRB).

\_\_\_\_\_ the status of the proposal is hereby changed from Fail to Pass Without Revisions, and the student is authorized to schedule another proposal defense meeting with all members of the dissertation committee.

Dissertation Chair: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature)

Student: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature)

**OPTION B:** I have read the revised dissertation proposal submitted by the above named student and have determined that further revisions are needed. These required revisions are as follows (use an additional sheet of paper as needed):

Per discussion with the student, the agreed-upon date for submitting the further revised proposal to the dissertation Chair is \_\_\_\_\_.

Dissertation Chair: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature)

Student: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature)

Appendix F: Template Illustrating Final Dissertation Document

[Type here]

TITLE OF YOUR CLINICAL DISSERTATION

by

Your Name

Dissertation Committee

Jane Doe, Psy.D., Chair

Paul Smith, Ph.D.

Amanda Jones, Ph.D.

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of  
DOCTOR OF PSYCHOLOGY

Department of Counseling and Clinical Psychology

Medaille College

Buffalo, NY 14214

Month, Year

**DISSERTATION APPROVAL SHEET**

[Type here]

This dissertation was submitted by [Your Name] under the direction of the Chairperson of the dissertation committee listed below. It was submitted to the Department of Counseling and Clinical Psychology and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Psychology at Medaille College.

Approved:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Defense

\_\_\_\_\_  
Jane Doe, Psy.D., Chair

\_\_\_\_\_  
Paul Smith, Ph.D.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Amanda Jones, Ph.D.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Final Approval

\_\_\_\_\_  
Jane Doe, Psy.D., Chair

[Sample Table of Contents for Empirical Research]

[Type here]

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
LIST OF TABLES.....	v
LIST OF FIGURES.....	vi
DEDICATION [optional].....	vii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS [optional].....	viii
ABSTRACT.....	ix
CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
Heading.....	3
Subheading.....	7
Subheading.....	9
Subheading.....	12
Heading.....	16
Subheading.....	17
Subheading.....	22
Subheading.....	26
Heading.....	28
Subheading.....	30
Subheading.....	33
Subheading.....	37
CHAPTER II. METHOD.....	46
Research Design.....	46
Participants.....	47
Measures.....	49
Procedure.....	53
Data Analysis Strategy.....	59
CHAPTER III. RESULTS.....	60
Hypothesis One.....	60
Hypothesis Two.....	63
Hypothesis Three.....	66
CHAPTER IV. DISCUSSION.....	69
Heading [e.g., interpretation and discussion of findings re: Hypothesis One].....	69
Heading [e.g., interpretation and discussion of findings re: Hypothesis Two].....	78
[Type here]	



Heading [interpretation and discussion of findings re: Hypothesis Three].....	90
Clinical Implications.....	98
Future Directions for Research.....	106
Limitations of the Research.....	111
Conclusions.....	113
REFERENCES.....	115
TABLES.....	130
FIGURES.....	135
APPENDIX A. IRB Approval Statement.....	139
APPENDIX B: Explanation of Study for Participants.....	141
APPENDIX C: Participant Demographic Information Form.....	143
APPENDIX D: Participant Consent Form.....	146
APPENDIX E: Measure #1.....	148
APPENDIX F: Measure #2.....	151
APPENDIX G: Measure #3.....	153

iv

[Sample Table of Contents for Systematic Review of Literature]

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

	PAGE
LIST OF TABLES.....	v
LIST OF FIGURES.....	vi
DEDICATION [optional].....	vii

[Type here]

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS [optional].....	viii
ABSTRACT.....	ix
ABSTRACT.....	iii
CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
Heading.....	3
Subheading.....	3
Subheading.....	8
Subheading.....	12
Subheading.....	16
Heading.....	19
Subheading.....	20
Subheading.....	26
Subheading.....	29H
Heading.....	33
Subheading.....	33
Subheading.....	39
Subheading.....	43
CHAPTER II. METHOD.....	46
Data Collection Procedures.....	46
Databases and Keywords.....	47
Other Sources.....	48
Document Selection.....	49
Inclusion Criteria.....	49
Exclusion Criteria.....	50
Data Analysis Strategy.....	50
CHAPTER III. RESULTS.....	57
Heading.....	57
Subheading.....	62
Subheading.....	69
Subheading.....	76
Subheading.....	81
Heading.....	86
Subheading.....	89
Subheading.....	98
Subheading.....	107
Heading.....	115
Subheading.....	117
Subheading.....	124
Subheading.....	130
CHAPTER III. DISCUSSION.....	136
Heading.....	137
Subheading.....	147

[Type here]

Subheading.....	154
Subheading.....	160
Heading.....	160
Subheading.....	168
Subheading.....	175
Subheading.....	181H
Heading.....	182
Subheading.....	189
Subheading.....	198
Subheading.....	207
Methodological Issues.....	214
Future Research Directions.....	222
Clinical Implications.....	227
Limitations of the Systematic Literature Review.....	236
Conclusions.....	239
REFERENCES.....	243
TABLES.....	263
FIGURES.....	268
APPENDIX A. IRB Approval Statement.....	272
APPENDIX B: Explanation of Study for Participants.....	273

## LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 1. Participant Demographic Data.....	263
Table 2. Inter-rater Percentage Agreement Among Coders.....	264
Table 3 Pearson Correlations Among XXXXX.....	265
Table 4. Means and Standard Deviations for XXXX .....	266

[Type here]

Table 5. Treatment Effects on Outcome Measures.....	267
---	-----

v  
LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 1. Flowchart of Participation Through Each Stage of the Study.....	268
Figure 2. Improvement in Client Ratings on Factor 1.....	269
Figure 3. Trajectories of Anxiety Symptoms as a Function of Treatment Stage.....	270
Figure 4. Graphical Depictions of Variable A X Variable B Interaction Effects.....	271

[Type here]

vi

DEDICATION [optional]

[Type here]

vii  
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS [optional]

[Type here]

viii

ABSTRACT

[Type here]

ix

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

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## CHAPTER II

### METHOD

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### CHAPTER III

#### RESULTS

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## REFERENCES

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Table 1

*Participant Demographic Data*

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Table 2

*Inter-rater Percentage Agreement Among Coders*

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*Figure 1.* Flowchart of Participation Through Each Stage of the Study.

[Place Figure 2 here]

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