

GUIDELINES FOR DOCTORAL PROPOSALS

Revised: 10/19/2020

GENERAL UNIVERSITY GUIDELINES

Before starting to write your text, it will be extremely helpful to check out the requirements of Duquesne University for submitting your dissertation or DHCE project to Gumberg Library when the text is approved by the review committee. If the approved text is not accepted in the library system, the PhD or DHCE title will not be awarded. It can save a lot of time if you already used the guidelines from the moment you start to write.

- Look at: <http://guides.library.duq.edu/content.php?pid=289421&sid=2756907>

- Prepare your text following the Electronic and Dissertation (ETD) Guidelines; these specifically concern requirements for use of fonts (12 Times New Roman or Times) and line-spacing (double line spacing), margins, pagination, headings, tables, notes and references

- All text should follow *Chicago Manual of Style* format.

MATERIALS OF THE PROPOSAL.

1. Thesis Statement.

Ideally, this should be one page, double-spacing, without notes or references. Make these points. First, **what** is the thesis? (a thesis is not the title of the proposal; it formulates a specific research question or problem that is the basic starting point for your research). Explain the thesis within the literature landscape on the general topic. Second, **how** do you plan to develop the argument in each chapter (eg, history, theory, law, etc).

For example: the ethical justification of indirect abortion in situations of life-threatening pulmonary hypertension (what the ethics thesis is) is explained by discussing these issues (how the thesis is developed): the science of pulmonary hypertension (Ch.1); the history of the debate on abortion (Ch.2); the relevant law in the US (Ch.3); the theory of the principle of double effect – PDE (Ch.4); the application of PDE to the case of pulmonary hypertension (Ch.5).

2. State of the Question.

This section of the analysis looks backward: situate the ethics thesis within the main literature that shapes the debate on the topic. This section explains the relevance and originality of the dissertation. However, do not explain the literature in too much detail here – that occurs in the section on “Literature Review.” The goal here is to identify a gap in the literature that the ethics thesis addresses. The question here is **why** your ethics thesis is relevant and original.

3. Literature Review.

This section of the analysis looks forward: explain the development of the ethics thesis in relation to the major literature that will be discussed in each chapter. While there will be overlap with the “State of the Question,” the goal here is to introduce in a substantive manner the literature that each chapter will engage. One way of writing the Literature Review is as follows – after completing the Chapter

Analysis (item 5 below). In the Chapter Analysis you succinctly delineate the argument in each chapter with the relevant scholars in parentheses (eg, Smith 2012) – the point here is to show the reader what literature your major points engage. After the Chapter Analysis is finished, you can then summarize each chapter succinctly in the Literature Review section, focusing only on the major literature used. For example, in the Chapter Analysis a given chapter will have many parenthetical references to multiple scholars; but the main argument could focus around a few scholars. In this case, the Literature Review section explains that the chapter will focus on a few major scholars (providing a brief summary of their arguments). Typically, this occurs when a debate can be neatly organized into distinctive perspectives, contrasting with each other or developing from each other. Plan on approx. 4-5 pages for the Literature Review – that gives a sense of the number of scholars to include in each chapter.

Relevant resources for finding literature are available on the special Healthcare Ethics Resources website of Gumberg Library: <http://guides.library.duq.edu/hce>
Other relevant sites are mentioned on the HCE website:
<http://www.duq.edu/academics/schools/liberal-arts/centers/center-for-healthcare-ethics/our-research-interests>

If you need assistance, don't hesitate to contact Librarian Ted Bergfelt.

4. Dissertation Review.

This length of section will vary depending on how many doctoral dissertations or master's theses have been written on the subject (to be researched in the Gumberg Library). The librarian supporting HCE will be able to assist. The text must identify all relevant doctoral & master's studies to identify the distinctiveness of your ethics thesis.

For identifying relevant theses and dissertations, you have to search databases through a number of specific websites. See: <http://guides.library.duq.edu/hce-dissertations>. These websites are easily accessible through this page.

5. Chapter Analysis; Summary of Analysis

The Chapter Analysis briefly presents the argument in each chapter with reference to the relevant literature in parentheses (eg. Smith 2012). The purpose here is to provide a succinct account of the argument and literature in each chapter. All sections and subsections that are listed in the contents outline must be readily identifiable in the dissertation narrative.

6. Contents Outline

The outline should list chapter titles, section titles, and at least one level of subsection titles.

7. The Habit of Writing.

The habit of writing can be compared to taking regular exercise: if you stop exercising for an extended time starting again is not easy. Similarly, try to

develop a habit of writing as often as possible, ideally every day even for a short time. Also try to send the faculty mentor portions of text as much as possible so that you can refine the art of excellent writing.

LAYOUT OF THE PROPOSAL.

- Title page (the title should indicate a clear ethics thesis).
- Signature Approval page.
- Table of Contents.
- State of the Question (the relevance of and need for the thesis).
- Thesis Statement with Objectives (the argument & its justification).
- Review of the Literature (relating the thesis with scholarship).
- Dissertations Review (the originality of the thesis).
- Summary of analysis (the narrative explanation of the work in each chapter).
- Contents Outline.
- Bibliography (only works cited in the analysis).

LENGTH OF THE PROPOSAL.

Insofar as PhD dissertations extend to approximately 250 pages, and DHCE doctoral projects extend to approximately 100 pages, the length of the Proposal for the PhD Dissertation should be approximately 50 pages (including 25 pages of narrative with 10 pages of bibliography, plus the other components), and the length of the Proposal for the DHCE Project should be approximately 25 pages (including 10 pages of narrative with 3 pages of bibliography, plus the other components). Typically there will be 7 Chapters. Ch.1=Intro; Ch.7=Conclusion.

PROCEDURAL STEPS FOR THE PROPOSAL:-

Procedural Steps for PhD Dissertation.

- ***One-page statement:*** ethics thesis and chapter outline developing the thesis.
- ***Twenty-five page narrative:*** State of the Question (2p), Thesis Statement (1p), Five chapters with sections, sub-sections, and literature identified (end-notes).
- ***Final Proposal:*** 50 pages (25 pages narrative, 10 pages cited bibliography plus the other components – see layout above).

Procedural Steps for DHCE Project.

- ***One-page statement:*** ethics thesis and chapter outline developing the thesis.
- ***Ten page narrative:*** State of the Question (2p), Thesis Statement (1p), Five chapters with sections, sub-sections, and literature identified (end-notes).
- ***Final Proposal:*** 25 pages (10 pages narrative, 3 pages cited bibliography plus the other components – see layout above).

SAMPLE PROPOSALS:

Several sample Proposals are available. Students may develop different approaches.

MEETINGS WITH FACULTY DIRECTOR.

Meetings will be arranged to discuss progress and problems. These meetings are distinct from the HCE semester seminars.

TIME STATUTES. The College and HCE enforce these Time Statutes.

- Proposal Approval must be within 2 years after passing Comprehensive Exams.
- Doctoral text must be approved within 4 years after passing Comprehensive Exams.

FORMAT FOR REFERENCES IN END-NOTES & BIBLIOGRAPHY.

These are summary guidelines to assist with the use of commas, colons, periods: these differ when used in notes and in the bibliography. Only use end-notes, not foot-notes.

Citations in End-notes.

Articles. Smith, Jane, "Article Title," *Journal Title* 4 (2007): 73.

Books. Smith, Jane, *Book Title* (City: Publisher, year), 45-48.

Book Chapters. Smith, Jane, "Chapter Title," in, Joseph Bloggs, *Book Title* (City: Publisher, year), 45-76.

Citations in Bibliography.

Articles. Smith, Jane. "Article Title." *Journal Title* 4 (2007): 67-89.

- Journal in italics.
- The first number (4, or 4:2 etc) is the journal year number.
- The journal year is in parentheses; (2007) or (Summer 2007).
- The page numbers are preceded with a colon.

Books. Smith, Jane. *Book Title*. City: Publisher, year.

Book Chapters. Smith, Jane. "Chapter Title." In, Joseph Bloggs, *Book Title* (City: Publisher: year), 45-76.

GUIDELINES FOR THE ORAL DEFENSE OF THE DOCTORAL PROPOSAL.

1. See HCE *Handbook* instructions, p.20, item B.4.c.iii Proposal Review Meeting.
2. The Oral Defense of the Doctoral Proposal lasts for approximately 1 hour.
3. The review committee will be composed of 3 Faculty (including the proposal director)
4. The student has 15 minutes to presents the proposal. The presentation should be akin to presenting a scholarly paper at an academic conference. A brief handout for the faculty committee can be helpful. PowerPoint slides are not permitted.
5. The remainder of the time is dedicated to faculty asking the student questions about the Proposal.
6. At the end of the Defense, the student leaves the room briefly while faculty review the Defense. The student is invited back after a short time to hear the faculty assessment. The outcome will be: to accept the Proposal, or to request

further changes to the Proposal, or reject the Proposal. The faculty will explain any further work on the proposal that may be required.

MOVING FROM THE PROPOSAL TO THE DOCTORAL TEXT

See the *HCE Handbook* on the HCE website, sections B.4.d. on review of doctoral chapters and section B.4.e. on the doctoral defense.