



DISSERTATION SECTIONS RUBRIC

Instructions on how to utilize this Dissertation Sections Rubric

The Dissertation Sections Rubric is to be utilized to ensure that your study meets the rigor and quality required of all doctoral dissertations at St. Thomas University. Students are to ensure that they clearly read each specific criterion outlined and include the information that is required for each section. This document will be utilized by Dissertation Chairs and Committee members in their review of the dissertation chapters and final manuscript. If the criteria are met, the specific box will be annotated with the words “Met” and if the criteria are not met, then the box will be annotated “Not Met” and include the written comments required to meet the specific criteria. The entire sections criteria or specific sections of the criteria can be embedded into the actual dissertation that is being reviewed in order to provide visible feedback for the students’ revisions.

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Introduction to the Problem

The introduction to the problem section of Chapter 1 presents the problem to be addressed by the dissertation research that is worthy of further investigation. The introduction should present the problem or research focus for the study, briefly describe the nature and purpose of the study, present the guiding research questions, and explain the significance of and justification for conducting the study. It should also explain how this study will contribute to the existing knowledge about the problem or research focus. The introduction to the problem must introduce the reader to the problem in a concise yet complete manner and establish why the problem is worthy of further investigation.

Does the Introduction to the Problem section:

	1. Provide the reader with a clear understanding of the problem in a concise yet complete manner
	2. Demonstrate that the problem is worthy of further investigation
	3. Briefly describe how the study will be done
	4. Present the guiding research question or hypothesis for the study

	5. Explain how this study can contribute to the existing knowledge about the problem or research focus
	6. Describe how the study will address something that is not already known or has not been studied before
	7. Describe how the study is new or different from other studies in some way
	8. Describe how the study extends prior research on the topic in some way
	9. Describe how the study will fill a gap in existing literature or research

Background, Context and Theoretical Framework of the Study.

The background, context, and theoretical framework of the study should tell the reader what has happened in the past to create the problem or need today. It is a brief historical overview that answers these questions: What do we know? What created the problem? When did the problem begin, and for whom is it a problem? What research has been done?

This section provides information necessary to allow the reader to understand the background of the problem and context in which the problem occurs. The primary objectives in writing this section are (a) to provide a brief overview of research related to the problem; (b) to identify and describe the key components, elements, aspects, concepts of the problem; (c) to provide the reader with an understanding of how the problem arose and the specific context within which the problem is occurring; and (d) to briefly introduce the reader to the theoretical framework and how that framework either supports the proposed study or provides a theoretical context for developing the research problem. The length of this section will depend on the complexity of the problem. Many learner-researchers first develop a working draft of the literature review (Chapter 2), since a good portion of this section is a brief summary of the related literature. Typically, background sections are five to eight paragraphs but can be longer for more complex problems or for problems that have an extensive history of investigation.

The context for the study refers to the physical setting of the research and the natural or artificial (simulated) properties of that setting. In some research these properties are called “experimental conditions” or “study environment.”

This section should introduce the theory that will provide support and justification for your study. It will be used to briefly introduce the primary theoretical topics that will be developed in detail in Chapter 2.

The purpose of the theoretical framework is to tie the dissertation together. As the researcher, you should approach the proposed research from a theory or set of theories that provide the backdrop for the work (researchers do not create theory; they use established theory in which to embed their work). This section should describe how this study will relate to existing theories and discuss how the methodology being used in the study links to those theories. Questions to answer: Is the theoretical foundation strong? Are the theoretical sources apparent? Are they appropriate for the topic? Do they need

further explanation? Further, the theoretical framework describes a context within which to locate the intended project and suggests why doing such a study is worthwhile. The theoretical framework justifies the methods you plan to use for conducting the study and presents how this research will contribute to the body of knowledge and/or practice.

Does the Background, Context and Theoretical Framework section:

	1. Describe why the study is being conducted
	2. Provide a brief overview of research related to the problem
	3. Identify and describe the key components, elements, aspects, concepts of the problem
	4. Describe who or what is impacted by the problem or research focus
	5. Provide the reader with an understanding of how the problem arose and the specific context within which the problem is occurring
	6. Briefly introduce the reader to the theoretical framework and how that framework either supports the proposed study or provides a theoretical context for developing the research problem
	7. Describe the research methods planned for the study
	8. Justify the research methods planned for the study

Statement of the Problem.

Begin this section with a problem statement—“It is not known” OR “There is a gap in the literature regarding” followed by “how . . .” (qualitative) OR “to what extent . . .” (quantitative). This succinct statement must clearly define what is to be measured in the study: the problem or need for education and/or society that you are interested in or that concern you. The statement needs to be clear and express what the problem is. Indicate either what is not known or what is wrong. What problem exists for education and/or society? What do we not know? What is the need we are trying to address? Do we need more research? Do we need to increase our understanding of the problem? Do we need to find ways to solve it? It is the magnitude and importance of the problem that makes the study worth doing.

The problem statement, the purpose statement, and primary or central research question will vary only slightly in their wording, but the essence of each should be identical and uniform for all three sections. The problem statement will lead to the purpose statement, which in turn will lead to the primary or central research question. The problem statement will clarify, outline, limit, and bring into being a distinct image of the problem to be investigated. The most effective problem statements are (a) expressed simply, (b) to the point, and (c) clear in stating the nature of the problem.

This section clearly states the research problem to be addressed, the population affected, and how the study will contribute to addressing the problem/filling the gap in the literature. A well-written problem statement also clearly communicates the significance, magnitude, and importance of the problem.

Does the Problem Statement section:

1.	Begin with a clear declarative statement that begins with “It is not known how and to what degree/extent.....” or "There is a gap in the literature regarding
2.	Describe the general problem
3.	Identify the need for the study and why it is of concern to the researcher.
4.	Tell the reader what needs to be discovered or what is wrong that needs to be fixed.
5.	Answer the questions: What don't we know? What is the need we are trying to address? Do we need more research? Do we need to increase our understanding of the problem? Do we need to find ways to solve it?
6.	Clearly describe the magnitude and importance of the problem.

Purpose of the Study

Begin this section by stating the purpose of your study (e.g., “The purpose of the study is to . . . in order to . . .”). Within the *larger* problem or need, this is the *part* that you are going to study. Ask the questions: What are you going to do, describe, predict, improve, or explain? What needs to be done? Are you going to find out who is affected and how (descriptive), what characteristics/phenomena are associated with the problem (prediction), what factors contribute to the problem (explanation), and/or what programs and services are needed to address the problem (improve)?

Example:⇒ The purpose of this study is to examine the attitudes, practices, and barriers [interesting terms—each will need to be defined and examined carefully as related to the explanation of your study] of parental involvement as perceived by middle school teachers and parents.←

The purpose statement should either (a) end with an “in order to” conclusion so that your reader understands why the research is being proposed, or (b) have a second sentence explaining why the research is being proposed (what goal will the study accomplish?)

Does the Purpose of the Statement section:

1.	Begin with a declarative statement, "The purpose of this study is...." that identifies the research design, population, variables to be studied and geographic location in context
2.	Describe what needs to be done with the problem or research focus identified so far
3.	Relate the current study to what needs to be done with the problem or research focus
4.	Identify research method as qualitative, quantitative, or mixed.

	5. Explain why this study is necessary to address the problem or to advance the research focus
	6. Specify how the results of the study can contribute to this field

Research Questions or Hypotheses.

In this section the researcher narrows the focus of the study. The questions are derived from the problem statement. Within the general purpose of the study, what are the specific questions the research will attempt to answer? If *quantitative*, state the research question(s) and the hypotheses that will be researched. Quantitative research may have one question or several questions. One way of organizing research questions is identify a primary research question followed by additional or sub-questions. The primary research question should flow logically from the problem statement and purpose statement and be very similar in wording although phrased as a question. If there is no primary research question, simply list all of the research questions. Sequence the questions by priority and by listing those questions first that best align to the problem and purpose statements. Follow testable quantitative research questions with an alternative hypothesis and the null hypotheses. Non-testable research questions will not have hypotheses.

When creating a research question for each hypothesis, follow these steps:

- Creating a research question for each hypothesis by rephrasing each hypothesis from “There is” to “Is there . . . ?”
- Place each research question before the corresponding hypotheses.

You may present a paragraph prior to listing the research question or hypothesis. Minimally, you will need a lead-in phrase to introduce the questions. Example:⇒ The following research questions/hypotheses guide this study.⇐

Quantitative Studies

R₁: Format the questions and hypotheses either as normal paragraphs with an indented first line or else with a hanging indent (as in question 2, below).

H₀:

H₁:

R₂: Format the questions and hypotheses either as normal paragraphs with an indented first line (as in question 1, above) or else with a hanging indent.

H₀:

H₂:

Qualitative Studies

For qualitative research, develop a central research question that mirrors the statement of the problem and purpose statement, but is phrased as a question rather than a statement. Follow the central research question by any additional or corollary research questions.

Does the Research Questions and/or Hypotheses section:

	1. State the research questions and/or hypotheses at the level aimed at a general audience
	2. Relate the research questions and/or hypotheses to the stated problem/research focus
	3. Are the research questions and rationale presented in a discussion context, rather than simply stated or listed.
	4. Discuss the feasibility of answering the research questions with the data being collected

Significance of the Study.

This section must clearly justify the methods the researcher plans to use for conducting the study. It provides a description of the need for the study and provides a rationale or need for studying an issue or phenomenon. It should enhance the reader's understanding of how this research will contribute to the existing body of knowledge and/or practice.

Determining the significance of the study is highly beneficial on many levels. How will your research help solve the problem, fill a need, or add to what we know about the problem? Determining who will benefit from the study and creating justification of the study will provide relevance, while at the same time increasing its significance and contributions to theory, practice, knowledge, fields, professions, and/or stakeholders.

Example:⇒ This study examines attitudes, practices, and barriers of fifth through eighth grade teachers and parents regarding parental involvement. The information presented in this study could aid administrators and teachers in developing and implementing initiatives that promote and increase middle level parental involvement, enhance the school and family partnership, and ultimately increase student performance and academic success.←

Organize this section with three subsections—Rationale, Relevance, and Significance. This will leave no doubt in the reader's mind regarding which issue/topic is covered by each section. These three sections are very important and provide readers, including committee members, all necessary elements to make a judgment regarding the

potential significance of your proposed study. Your proposed study must be relevant to your specialization at St. Thomas University.

Rationale for the Proposed Study

The proposed study is needed because . . . Why is the study being proposed? What practice problem does this proposed study address, provide a solution, or help to solve? Why is the research problem important? To whom is the research problem important? How has this proposed study emerged from the relevant research, theory and knowledge in your field or discipline? Who are the researchers or content experts calling for this research? Who has asked for this new knowledge or acknowledged existence of a gap in the research literature (which researchers, authorities, content experts)? Will the new knowledge the study generates revise, extend, or create new knowledge? For whom?

Relevance of the Study

What is the relevance to your specialization (leadership)? Be sure to identify your specialization (e.g., postsecondary and adult education, professional studies, P-12 leadership, business, law, etc). What is the potential value of your findings to practitioners in your specialization?

Significance of the Study

What is the value of the proposed study to the scientific community? Will your proposed study serve to begin to close a gap in knowledge? How will the new knowledge produced as a result of this proposed study contribute to, test, advance, refine, evaluate, or challenge existing theory or research? Will your proposed study begin to bridge a debate or controversy in the literature? Will your completed study impel further research?

Does the Significance of the Study section:

	1. Clearly justify the research methods planned for this study
	2. Enhance the reader's understanding of how this research will contribute to the body of knowledge and/or practice.
	3. Describe the context within which to locate the intended project
	4. Describe why doing this study is worthwhile.
	5. Describe the need for this study
	6. Describe the motivation for the study
	7. Describe the predicted results.
	8. Describe the real-world impact/influence of the predicted results.
	9. Explain the implications

Nature of the Study.

In this section you indicate the research approach that will be used to answer the research questions—the overview of the methodology. Why are you choosing a qualitative or quantitative study? (Refer back to what is known and not known, the purpose of your study, and your research questions.) Briefly, who will you study and how will you collect the data?

The nature of the study section provides your reader a brief overview of your proposed methodology (quantitative, qualitative, research) and the specific research design (e.g., case study, narrative, correlational, basic descriptive qualitative, case phenomenological). Begin this section by briefly introducing the research methodology and specific research design being proposed (this will be elaborated in Chapter 3). Examples:⇒ (a) A predictive correlational study is proposed in order to (b) A quasi-experimental design will be conducted in order to ⇐ Provide a brief overview of the research design so your reader understands exactly what research design you are proposing.

Conclude this section by providing a brief rationale or justification for the methodology and research design you selected in light of the context for inquiry, using support from the literature. Draw your support for the appropriateness of your methodology and research design from the methodology literature and cite published research regarding your research problem. Detail and emphasize how your methodology and research design approach are the most appropriate for the research problem, purpose, research question, and data being collected. The nature of the study section typically is three to five paragraphs.

Does the Nature of the Study section:

	1. Provide a brief, yet comprehensive overview of the research methodology that will be used in the study.
	2. Explain to the reader why a qualitative or quantitative methodology was chosen for the study.
	3.
	4. Refer back to what is known and not known, the purpose for the study, rationale, and the essential research questions or hypotheses.
	5. Discuss why the selected design is the best design to address the problem statement, purpose, and research questions as compared to other designs.

The Definition of Terms.

Defining key terms helps to establish the parameters of the study variables. All terms must be properly cited. Do not use Wikipedia or a generic dictionary or encyclopedia for your definitions. In the definition of terms, define (a) technical terms

and any words or phrases that have unusual or a restricted meaning; (b) concepts, words, and phrases that may have ambiguous meaning (e.g., if a researcher is repeatedly using an ambiguous expression or term such as “engaging,” define this word); (c) for quantitative research, define the variables as well as the relationships between the variables and the research question (see the detailed explanation below); and (d) for qualitative research, define the constructs, characteristics, or conditions necessary to provide your reader conceptual clarity (see the detailed explanation below). The definition of terms section aids the reader in understanding how specific terms are being used. Although it makes sense to draw definitions from the literature, the researcher ultimately establishes the definition that best fits the researcher’s conceptualization of the term in light of the research problem, research design, and so on.

Please note that in Chapter 1 you will provide conceptual definitions. In Chapter 3 of a quantitative study, you will provide operational definitions through the operationalizing of your constructs and variables. For example, if you are conducting a study on teacher engagement, you might want to define the term. However, in Chapter 3 you might operationalize teacher engagement as a composite score calculated by adding a respondent’s values to 20 items on a teacher engagement instrument.

You must have an introductory statement prior to listing and defining the terms, as in the following example:

Example:⇒ There are a number of terms that are important to this study. As such, the following terms are operationally defined:

The first term. Italicize the term and end with a period. Add the definition. Format each term as a normal paragraph with an indented first line. Make sure each definition is cited (Author, 2020).

The second term. List the terms alphabetically. Define and cite each word (Author, 2020).←

Does the Definitions of Terms section:

	1. Adequately define constructs investigated in the study
	2. Provide an operational definition to terms and phrases used in a unique way
	3. Define the study variables at the level of a general reader.
	4. Define terms and jargons used in the current study and in the research area at the level of a general reader.
	5. All definitions are supported with valid source citations or clearly identified as operationally defined for the purpose of this study?

Assumptions, Limitations and Delimitations.

Assumptions

Assumptions are aspects of the study that the researcher takes for granted, such as the problem, background, sample, instrument, underlying theory, methodology, ethical considerations, and so on. Therefore, within the assumptions discussion, identify all your assumptions regarding the proposed study. Write in the third person. Example: ⇒ An assumption underlying the study includes the potential honesty and candidness of the participants regarding ⇐ Assumptions may include basic principles that are accepted as being true on the basis of logic or reason, without proof or verification. Describe your methodological assumptions. Describe your theoretical assumptions. Describe your topic-specific assumptions. Describe your assumptions regarding your proposed sample. Describe your assumptions regarding your instrument(s) or qualitative protocols you will use. Identify potential ethical considerations and your assumptions regarding them. You must have an introductory statement prior to listing the assumptions.

The following is an example of how to organize this section:

Example:⇒ The following assumptions will be present in this study:

1. Using the Numbering icon on the formatting toolbar, format numbered lists with a hanging indent.
2. xx ⇐

Limitations

Limitations reflect weaknesses or potential weaknesses in the proposed study. Consider your instrument, your sample, your analysis, or any other aspect of the proposed study for which there might be an inherent or potential weakness. Are there any threats to internal validity that are unavoidable or difficult to minimize? All studies have limitations, and they must be identified and discussed because they reflect the extent of critical thinking you have applied. Limitations clearly delineate what the research will NOT show or evidence.

The limitations should be listed in a numbered format and include an explanation that clearly shows why they are limitations. You must have an introductory statement prior to listing the limitations. The following is an example of how to organize this section:

Example:⇒ The following limitations will be present in this study:

1. x

Delimitations

Delimitations reflect how the scope of the proposed study has been narrowed or bounded. What will the proposed study not do and why not? Discuss delimitations as they relate to the literature that will not be reviewed and included, the population that will not be included, and the methodological procedures that will not be included. Provide reasons for the delimitations. The delimitations of a study are those characteristics that limit the scope (define the boundaries) of the study as determined by the conscious exclusionary and inclusionary decisions that were made throughout the development of the proposal.

These delimitations should be listed in a numbered format and include an explanation that clearly describes the decisions that were made as a result. You must have an introductory statement prior to listing the limitations. The following is an example of how to organize this section:

Example:⇒ The following delimitations will be present in this study:

1. x
2. xx←

Does the Assumptions, Limitations and Delimitations section:

	1. Identify the assumptions inherent with the research focus
	2. Identify the assumptions behind the stated research questions or hypotheses for this study.
	3. Provide a clear rationale for each assumption
	4. Identify the limitations of the study design.
	5. Provide a clear rationale for each limitation
	6. Identify the delimitations that might limit the scope of the study
	7. Describe the decisions that were made in the development of the proposal for research
	8. Discuss the generalizability of the study findings

Chapter 1 Summary

Include summary of salient points in chapter 1 as well as transition to chapter 2. Provide citations from scholarly sources to support key points.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction to the Literature Review

A literature review, or Chapter 2 of the dissertation, is an account of what has been published on a topic by accredited scholars and researchers. In writing the literature review, your purpose is to convey to your reader what knowledge and ideas have been established on a topic and what strengths and weaknesses exist in that body of knowledge. As a piece of writing, the literature review must be defined by a guiding concept or principal research focus. This chapter should be 25-30 pages long.

Prepare an introduction to your Chapter 2 that (a) explains the purpose of your proposed study, (b) orients and informs your reader about what Chapter 2 will do, (c) introduces your theoretical framework, (d) introduces your literature review themes (topics), and (e) provides a brief rationale for each theme. Briefly describe the literature search process (libraries accessed, databases searched, search terms, and so on) so a reader can understand and evaluate your process and criteria for achieving a thorough and appropriate review.

As you begin your work in writing the literature review, note that you are analyzing and synthesizing information, not listing a series of direct quotes. The following questions should be used to help you organize your literature review:

1. What do we already know in the immediate area concerned?
2. What are the characteristics of the key concepts or the main factors or variables?
3. What are the relationships between these key concepts, factors, or variables?
4. What are the existing theories?
5. Where are the inconsistencies or other shortcomings in our knowledge and understanding?
6. What views need to be (further) tested?
7. What evidence is lacking, inconclusive, contradictory or too limited?
8. Why study (further) the research problem?
9. What contribution can the present study be expected to make?
10. What research designs or methods seem unsatisfactory?

Avoid using many direct quotes: Your goal should be to synthesize the information. Use a direct quote only if paraphrasing the information would change the author's meaning.

Does the Introduction section:

	1. Describe the purpose of the study
	2. Describe the overall importance to the field.
	3. Describe why the field is interested in the topic.
	4. Describe how the study addresses something that is not known or has not been studied before.
	5. Describe how the study is new and different from other studies in some way.
	6. Describe how the study extends prior research on the topic in some way
	7. Describe how the study will fill a gap in the existing literature.
	8. Describes literature search process with sufficient detail that a reader can understand

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework section of Chapter 2 should provide the reader with an understanding of the underlying theories that serve as the foundation of the study. This section should provide a framework of questions and answers to support the overall development of the literature review. This section establishes a vantage point, a perspective, or a set of lenses through which the researcher views the problem. In this sense, the selection of a logical framework can serve as both a clarifying and exclusionary step in the research process. While it sharpens focus and consequently increases clarity brought to the problem area, it excludes from the view of the inquirer other perspectives that might be brought to bear on the problem.

Describe the theoretical or conceptual framework that supports your proposed study. Every scholarly study has a theoretical base upon which it is built. Even the most practical of studies has a theoretical foundation. Sometimes it is difficult to identify the relevant theory or theories, but it is necessary to do so because research studies that lack a theoretical base are not dissertations.

Organize your framework by components (label each component) and explain how the related research, theories and/or models within each component supports and forms a foundation or basis for your proposed research. Cluster the related studies, other literature, theories, and models, and label (use headings) the components of your framework. When describing theories or models, identify and explain their underlying concepts, constructs, assumptions, and generalizations (theoretical expectations or testable hypotheses). If the theory or model you are presenting is based on or developed from other theories or models, briefly identify, describe and explain these theories or models as well and the interrelationships among theory, models, research, and practice. Give your readers a clear picture of the framework (underlying foundation) for your proposed study, and how that interrelated components of the framework appropriately

support your proposed study and how the framework has the efficacy to explain your findings. It is not enough, for example, to simply state that resiliency theory and the research literature that examined coping skills support the proposed study. Instead, you must provide the concepts, assumptions, and generalizations/theoretical expectations of resiliency theory that apply to the problem and explain how the theory and the findings of coping skills literature form an interrelated framework to support the proposed study. Demonstrate how the interrelationships among the research literature findings and the concepts, assumptions, and generalizations or theoretical expectations of theories or models all fit together to form a framework that can potentially explain the phenomenon under investigation.

Does the Theoretical Framework section:

	1. Provide the reader with an understanding of the underlying theories that serve as the foundation of the study
	2. Establish the foundation and structure of your study that can hold or support a theory of a research work.
	3. Cite the major references in support of the theory that is applied or developed in the study
	4. Explain why the problem under investigation exists.
	5. Provide the reader with a framework of questions and answers to support the overall literature review
	6. Provide a vantage point through which the researcher views the problem
	7. Provide a “big picture” of the literature related to the topic.
	8. Identifies themes and trends in research questions, methodology, and findings.
	9. Describe how this study aligns or fits with other research in the field

Review of the Research Literature and Methodological Literature

Introduce this section by explaining what will be included and, if applicable, how the review will be organized (typically organized by topics, which we call themes). Thus the review is thematically organized.

Does the Review of the Research Literature and Methodological Literature introduction section:

	1. Describe what will be included in the literature review
	2. Describe how the literature review will be organized

Review of Research Regarding the Topic/ Problem

You must review other research studies and findings relevant to your research problem. What research has been done that is similar to the research you propose? In presenting the review of research on the topic, discuss the line of investigation (if applicable) of previous studies on the topic. Discuss and analyze studies (a) that lay the foundation for your proposed study, (b) that support the main topic/problem or related sub-problems, (c) that elucidate the research problem, and (d) and that justify the need for the study. If there has been a considerable amount of research related to the topic or problem, organize the review by three to five major themes (topics) relevant to your topic/problem. Begin each theme with an introduction that briefly tells your reader what will be presented in the review within that specific theme. Begin each theme with an introduction of the theme, which provides your reader with a context of understanding the theme's purpose and relationship to the proposed study's main problem/topic. Summarize each study in relationship to the theme and, if applicable, to the research problem or your research intentions. If the literature is available, always show both sides of an issue, problem, model, etc.

Develop summary paragraphs for each theme that synthesize the literature, draw conclusions, and emphasize the supportive relationship between the theme and your proposed study, how the theme served to lay the foundation for the study, or how the theme elucidated the research problem or/and how the theme helps justify the need for the proposed study. These conclusions will strengthen Chapter 2 as a coherent whole and as a persuasive chapter. Remember, your goal is to persuade your reader that your topic is significant and your proposed study is needed.

Does the Review of Research Regarding the Topic/ Problem section:

1. Discuss the line of investigation of previous studies on the topic and identify most important findings
2. Discuss and analyze significant studies that lay the foundation to this study
3. Organize the literature review by appropriate themes relevant to the topic
4. Review studies related to variables/phenomena of interest identified in the research questions for the proposed study.
5. Provide a clear description of what is known, what is not known, and the gap in the research literature where the proposed study will fit
6. Provide critique and synthesis of reviewed studies, not just summary

Review of Methodological Issues

The focus of this review is methods and definitions, providing not only a summary of studies but also an actual critique of the strengths and weaknesses of the method sections.

In this section, consider and discuss the various designs that have been used to research your topic. What studies best support your choice of the proposed research

design? What methodological issues arose in your review? For example, has the topic/problem been only researched with one kind of research design when other designs could provide helpful information? What studies support your choice of design and instrument (if quantitative)? What studies support your choice of research design? Discuss the fit or alignment among the purpose of your proposed study, the research question, and the other research designs you considered. Describe why your proposed research design fits best with the purpose of your research and the research question. Occasionally, a learner might justify viability based on the basis that other designs might not be possible or practical.

In proposing a quantitative study, discuss studies the support and justify your choice of instrument(s), constructs, and variables. For a qualitative study, discuss studies that support and justify your specific choice of research design. For example, why is a basic qualitative study the best fit? Why are phenomenological or grounded theory designs not as good a fit? Use the literature for support of your design as the most viable choice. Identify the philosophical foundation for you research design and how that foundation or tradition fits with the problem and your choice of research design.

Does the Review of Methodological Issues section:

	1. Identify and discuss the various research designs that have been used to research the focus/topic for this proposed study
	2. Identify and discuss the methodological issues that arose previous to this study
	3. Identify specific studies that support the choice of design and instrument for this proposed study

Synthesis of Research Findings

In this section, synthesize the findings to develop a holistic understanding of the research problem/topic and present the larger themes/issues, inconsistencies, or relevant patterns based on the research studies you presented. Your synthesis allows your reader to understand what your review of the literature led you to conclude about your own question and researchable problem. Justify your proposed study and your choice of research design. Summarize the main points of Chapter 2, showing both the strengths and the weaknesses of the literature reviewed and your project's relationship with the previous research on the topic, both in content (research findings) and methods (methodology). This section can be relatively brief provided that it presents a clear synthesis.

Does the Synthesis of Research Findings section?

	1. Develop a holistic understanding of the research problem/topic
	2. Present the larger themes, issues, inconsistencies, or relevant patterns based on the studies presented
	3. Allow the reader to understand what the review of literature led you to conclude about the current research problem/topic
	4. Summarize the main points showing both the strengths and weaknesses of the literature reviewed

Critique of Previous Research

In this section, briefly summarize the quality of the research you have reviewed. Identify the strengths and weakness in terms of methodological soundness, credibility, validity and efficacy for generalizations (for quantitative research) and transferability (for qualitative research). Were all the studies methodologically sound? Discuss any studies that seemed weak or limited. What is the relationship between those limitations and the study you are proposing? Consider and evaluate the rigor of designs, sampling errors, appropriateness of sample sizes relative to generalizations, the validity of research instruments, the appropriateness of statistical tests or procedures, and any other issues related to the quality of the studies you reviewed. This section does not need to be lengthy. Rather it demonstrates your critical review of the quality of the studies you presented in your literature review.

If applicable, in this section you can also discuss any debates, controversies, or criticism in the literature related to the theories or models and related research you presented in the theoretical framework section above. In light of the studies you reviewed, present opposing viewpoints, disconfirming evidence, or counterarguments those studies or any synthesis you provided from those studies. If applicable, incorporate debates or opposing views within the theoretical framework or literature review section if you like and briefly summarize here and explain why you adopted one viewpoint on a debate or controversy over others. Conclude this section with an argument of how your proposed study will advance the literature and what characteristics make it rigorous and appropriate.

Does the Critique of Previous Research section?

	1. Provide the reader with a summary of the quality of the research reviewed
	2. Identify the strengths and weaknesses in terms of methodological soundness, credibility, validity and efficacy for generalizations
	3. Identify and discuss any previous studies that seemed weak or limited
	4. Identify the relationship between those limitations and the proposed study
	5. Demonstrate a critical review of the quality of the studies presented in the literature review

Chapter 2 Summary

Briefly synthesize a summary from the literature presented that summarizes the conclusions you have drawn from your review and makes a compelling argument for the need for your proposed study. Summarize your theoretical framework and state how you will advance (test, refine, extend or challenge) theory with your potential findings.

Provide an overall evaluation of the existing literature examining the contributions of this literature to the field, the overall strengths and weaknesses, what is missing, and next steps for research. A literature review is an account of what has been published on a topic by accredited scholars and researchers. The literature review will essentially place the research focus into context, telling the reader everything that is known, been written or discovered in research about that focus. Bottom line, the literature review will describe the existing body of knowledge about that focus. In writing the literature review, your purpose is to convey to your reader what knowledge and ideas have been established on a topic, and what their strengths and weaknesses are. As a piece of writing, the literature review must be defined by a guiding concept (e.g., your research objective, the problem or issue you are discussing or your argumentative thesis). It is not just a descriptive list of the material available or a set of summaries. Share transition sentence to chapter three by sharing major headings

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The primary purpose for Chapter 3 is to: 1. Explain what you are doing. Explain why you are doing what you are doing and HOW. The introduction restates the study purpose sentence from chapter 1, a brief cited restatement of the study problem from chapter 1, and a brief restatement of the conceptual framework for the study from chapter 1.

Does the Introduction to Chapter 3 section:

	1. Describe for the reader what the study is designed to do and why
	2. Briefly recap the research focus, the general purpose, and the research question(s) and/or hypotheses of the study
	3. Identify the general purpose for the study
	4. Restate the Research Questions and/or Hypotheses

Research Methodology –

The research methodology section must provide the reader with details on the type of research methodology that will be used in this study and justify why you selected this methodology. Use research (citations from *research textbooks* **and** *other studies* that have been done on this topic using this methodology) to support your decision. Do NOT talk about the research design (correlation, ex post facto, experimental, descriptive, ethnography, case study, etc.), the population or the sample in this section.

Does the Research Methodology section:

	1. Briefly recap the research focus, the general purpose, and the research question(s) and/or hypotheses of the study.
	2. Identify the research methodology (quantitative or qualitative).
	3. Explain the rationale of selecting this particular methodology.
	4. Describe the type of data that will be collected to answer the research question(s).
	5. Briefly describe the data collection process. (Described in greater detail later in this chapter)
	6. Justify what the study is measuring (variables) and how those variables are related if applicable
	7. Outline the predicted data results in relation to the hypotheses/research questions based on existing literature

Research Design

Discuss the design selected to align with the research methodology. The following are some examples of research designs that align to specific methodologies (this list is not all inclusive): Correlational, casual- comparative case study, action research, etc

Talk about the design in terms of the research you are doing and not in general terms. Use research (citations from *research textbooks* **and** *other studies* that have been done on this topic using this research design) to support your decision. **Do NOT talk about the research methodology, the population, or the sample in this section.** You can discuss the data collection tool (e.g., survey, interview, questionnaire, focus group, observation), **but not the actual instrument/source of data** (e.g., Leadership Behavior Questionnaire, Teacher Demographic Survey) that will be used in your study.

Does the Research Design section:

	1. Identify the specific type of research design (e.g. descriptive, case study, action research, correlational, causal-comparative, quasi-experimental and experimental) chosen for the study.
	2. Explain the rationale of selecting this particular research design.
	3. Specify the independent and dependent variables in the research design (for quantitative studies).
	4. Specify the phenomena of interest for qualitative studies.
	5. Relate the variables back to the research question(s) and hypotheses

Target Populations, Sampling Method and Related Procedures

Organize this discussion into five sections. Discuss the target population of your study in the first section. Discuss the sample and the sampling methods in the second section. Make sure that in discussing the sample you include the research terminology specific to the type of sampling that you utilized. That is, how did you select the participants for the study? Include number, gender, age, grade, or other category. Distinguish between probability and nonprobability sampling.

Target Population

What is the target population (total group) of interest in your study? The population of the study is the larger population of interest to which you will generalize your findings. Justify their sampling size for qual methods as well, based on advice from experts and/or similar studies. They should also discuss saturation.

Sampling Method

What type of sample are you going to use? How will participants or data be selected? What percentage of the approached sample participated?

It is impossible to study an entire population. We typically study a subset of people drawn from a larger population and may use inferential statistics/information to make an inference from the sample back to the population. Justify your sampling approach.

Sample Size

What is the size of your sample? If the sample is too small, it is not representative of the large population to which one hopes to generalize findings. Sample size requirements vary dependent upon the methodology. How was the intended sample size determined (for example, analysis of power for quantitative)? For qualitative studies, discuss saturation.

Qualitative Sample Size Requirements:

Case Study: A minimum of 10 participants or cases in the final sample for interviews.

Phenomenology: Minimum of 8 interviews. Students should pursue 12 individuals to interview to account for attrition. 60-90 minutes interview required

Descriptive/exploratory: A minimum of 10 participants in the final sample.

Narrative: Minimum of 8 interviews. Students should pursue 12 participants to account for attrition.

Grounded Theory: Grounded theory studies yield a theory or model. Usually two rounds of data collection with interim analysis

Open ended Questionnaires: This data collection method can be used in different qualitative designs.

Setting

Describe the setting and participants in the study. What is the setting/location from which participants will be recruited or data collected?

Recruitment

How did you select the participants for the study? Were there any incentives offered to study participants? How were participants recruited (via mail, email, face-to-face solicitation, other)?

Does the Target Populations, Sample Method and Related Procedures section:

	1. Introduce the setting for the study.
	2. Specify who the study participants are.
	3. Describe how the participants will be recruited and selected/excluded.
	4. Describe the sample size and the participants that were excluded or dropped out.

	5. Explain the rationale for setting the target sample size
	6. Accurately and adequately describe the population and sample

Instrumentation and/or Sources of Data:

The length of this section depends on the study. Use instrumentation heading if you are doing quantitative research that has data collection instruments. Use the “Sources of Data” heading if you are conducting qualitative research or quantitative research where archival data is used. If you have multiple tools that will be used to collect data, use subheadings for each. Keep in mind the following questions when completing this section:

- What types of data are you collecting (observations, standardized tests, surveys, interviews, documents)? That is, how will you measure each of the variables in your study?
- Will you use existing instruments? If so, you need to include everything about this instrument (i.e., how it was developed, for what purpose, how it was constructed, reliability and validity of the initial instrument, how the instrument is organized, how many items are on the instrument, how the computation of the items from the instrument is done, etc.)
- Are you using instruments that you have developed? If so, describe the development process. Keep in mind that if you will develop the instrument, then you will need to field test it. As such, you will need to add a section for a Pilot Study (For quantitative) or Panel of Experts (Qualitative) (to follow this section).

Does the Instrumentation and/or Sources of Data Section:

	1. Identify and describes the types of data that will be collected and how it will be collected (e.g., observations, standardized tests, surveys, interviews, documents).
	2. Identify how each data relates to the variables in the study and how each will be measured.
	3. Identify and describes the data collection instruments that will be used in the study
	4. Describe the reliability and validity of the data collection instruments for the population of the study.
	5. Describe the development process and how the instruments will be field tested if necessary.

Data Collection

Prior to beginning the discussion in the data collection section, you must discuss the approvals that were received (e.g., IRB, superintendent of the school district if the school is a public school, principal of the school) to conduct the study. The discussion in

this section also needs to include every detail about how the data will be collected no matter how small the detail. Another person needs to be able to replicate each step that you will do in your data collection process. So, think about providing a chronological list of steps that was taken to complete the data collection. That means the contact that is made with the participants (e.g., who will do it, when, in what manner), the actual administration of the data collection tool (e.g., how will this be done, who will do it, in what setting) as well as informed consent.

Does the Data Collection Section:

	1. Describe the source/instrumentation from which data is collected.
	2. Describe the exact procedure of collecting data from the identified source/instrumentation.
	3. Describe the context (spatial-temporal context, who is present... etc.) where data collection takes place.
	4. Describe the measures taken to ensure the validity and reliability of the data throughout the data collection process

Field Test /Pilot Test

Read the following discussion on field tests and pilot tests:

If you propose to design and develop your own instrument, a separate field test of the data collection tools and procedures and of the overall integrity of the design is often appropriate. In other cases, you may need to conduct a more formal pilot study to establish the reliability and validity of the instrument or to determine if the proposed research procedures will produce the anticipated results. (These procedures are most likely used in quantitative studies.)

Field tests are often recommended to assess the strength of research questions/hypotheses or to test the appropriateness of certain data-gathering protocols (e.g., informed consent procedures), instruments/tools (e.g., item content), and data analysis procedures. The proposal should include a description of the field testing of a collection method or instrument without the use of human participants (e.g., conducted through expert review or judgment). Such field tests may be conducted prior to the IRB approval. On the other hand, any “live” piloting of instruments to establish the reliability and validity of a customized instrument must first receive IRB approval.

A pilot study is most likely called for when you propose to design and validate a quantitative instrument intended for use as part of a larger study or to determine the reasonableness of the anticipated outcomes. A pilot study uses actual participants from the population upon which you are basing your study.

This section is necessary only if you conducted a Pilot Study or used a Panel of Experts to validate an instrument that you created, or if you revised another person’s instrument for your study. Use the heading that is appropriate for your study; do not use both unless both were completed. In the content of this section, you also need to discuss why these people (panel of experts or the participants who were used for the study) were chosen and how they determined the appropriateness of the instrument content. You must use research language to explain what you discuss.

Instrument Validity/Reliability: Pilot Study

A pilot study includes actual participants from the population upon which the study will be based to assess the validity of instruments/tools. Pilot studies are typically recommended when a researcher has created an instrument that is intended to measure something, or when a researcher has modified a valid instrument to the point that new validity information is necessary.

Does the Field Test/Pilot Test/Expert Panel section:

	1. Identify why a Field Test, Pilot Study or Panel of Experts was chosen to validate an instrument you created
	2. Identify why you chose to use another person’s instrument for your study
	3. Discuss why the people (panel of experts or the people that were used in the pilot study) were chosen
	4. Discuss how the panel of experts or the people that were used in the pilot study determined the appropriateness of the instrument content
	5. Use the research language appropriate to help explain what you are talking about

Data Analysis Procedures

The data analysis procedures section is an important component of Chapter 3. It should provide sufficient detail so that it takes a reader step by step through the process of how each research question will be answered, and when applicable, how each null hypothesis will be tested. The section will be developed differently depending on whether the student is proposing a quantitative or qualitative study. As with the other sections of Chapter 3, the data analysis procedures should be written as a *detailed blueprint*, showing each step the student intends to take (for the proposal) or actually took (for the completed dissertation) to analyze the data. The data analysis procedures section not only serves as a detailed road map for analysis but also provides clear direction to other researchers who wish to replicate the study.

Does the Data Analysis Procedures section:

	1. Provide a step-by-step description of the procedures to be used or conduct the data analysis.
	2. Describe in detail the relevant data collected for each stated research question and/or hypothesis.
	3. Describe in detail any statistical analysis to be employed for each stated research question and/or hypothesis.
	4. Describe in detail any non-statistical analysis to be employed for each stated research question and/or hypothesis.
	5. Provide a clear rationale for each of the (statistical and non-statistical) data analysis procedures employed in the study
	6. Describe the alignment between the research questions, research methodologies, types of data to be collected and proposed data analysis
	7. Use consistent language through the proposal to describe the type of design and data analysis plans

Trustworthiness *or* Validity and Reliability

For qualitative studies, this section is entitled Trustworthiness. For quantitative studies, it is entitled Validity and Reliability. For trustworthiness, present a rationale for how the four criteria for the assurances of data trustworthiness are met (credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability). For quantitative studies, justification for appropriate data assumption tests are presented along with appropriate interpretation of validity and reliability of the data gathered.

Internal Validity

Discuss your strategies for ensuring the internal validity of your proposed research design; in other words, the internal validity of your study. Internal validity in a quantitative study is the extent to which a study and its data results allow the researcher to draw accurate conclusions about the relationships found, such as cause and effect or correlation. Internal validity is important to determine whether the results of a study will determine a comparable accurate response. In an experimental study, internal validity reflects the extent to which the researcher has controlled for extraneous variables so that any observed effects can be solely attributed to the treatment variable. In other non-experimental quantitative studies, internal validity is the summation reasons why the researcher will be confident that any conclusions the researcher makes are warranted from the data collected and the method used.

Does the Internal Validity section:

	1. Discuss the strategies for ensuring the internal validity of the proposed research design
	2. Demonstrate that the study methodology controls for extraneous or confounding variables
	3. Demonstrate that the study methodology rules out alternative explanations
	4. Demonstrate that the study methodology rules out rival hypotheses
	5. Reiterates the appropriateness of your instruments/data sources in terms of the validity and reliability
	6. Discuss the sample size relative to confidence limits and statistical power.
	7. Emphasize the triangulation that you have incorporated in your method
	8. Emphasize how the limitations in your study and selection of key variables will preclude drawing an invalid conclusion

External Validity

External validity refers to the extent to which the results of the study apply to situations beyond the study itself. External validity is important to defending a research method because it determines how applicable research is to beyond the study. Discuss your strategies for ensuring the external validity of your proposed study. Will your findings have potential generalizability? Why or why not?

Does the External Validity section?

	1. Identify the extent to which the results of the study apply to situations beyond the study itself
	2. Discuss the strategies for ensuring the external validity of the proposed study
	3. Describes how the findings will have potential generalizability

Trustworthiness: (for Qualitative Studies)

Trustworthiness is the term used to describe the elements that establish the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the study. Strategies generally include rigorous techniques and methods, thick description, audit trails, evident methodological processes and procedures, well-defined coding, ample examples of quotes, and findings that clearly emerge from the data. Make sure that you define the concepts of credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability, and describe the threats to these concepts inherent in the study design, sampling strategy, data collection method/instruments, and data analysis and addresses how these threats will be minimized.

Also make sure appendices include copies of instruments, materials, qualitative data collection protocols, codebooks, and permission letters from instrument authors (for validated instruments, surveys, interview guides, etc.) where applicable.

Does the Trustworthiness section?

1. Define the concepts of credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability.
2. Describe the threats to the credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability of the study inherent in the study design, sampling strategy, data collection method/instruments, and data analysis
3. Address how these threats will be minimized

Ethical Issues

Discuss the ethical issues and how they will be addressed. These ethical issues include approval prior to beginning from IRB, informed consent if applicable, voluntary nature of study, protecting the identity of the participants, protection of confidentiality, reporting the results of the study, and data storage.

Does the Ethical Issues section?

1. Describe how the identity of the participants in the study will be protected
2. Discuss potential ethical concerns during the data collection process
3. Describe how the data collected will be safeguarded
4. Describe how the results of the study will be published
5. Identify any potential conflict of interest and explain how its effect on the results is minimized

Researcher’s Position Statement

Conflict of interest assessment. Researchers are required to ensure that academic, financial, or other personal interests do not compromise the objectivity with which their research is designed, conducted, and reported. Researchers and research supervisors are responsible for disclosing any personal relationships or financial interests that may present conflicts of interest and developing a plan to eliminate or manage potential conflicts of interest. Prior to approval of research studies that may present a conflict of interest, the IRB committee or designated reviewer will make a determination as to whether there was conflict. If applicable, explain how there will be no conflict of interest. If there is a potential or perceived conflict of interest, identify it and provide your strategies to avoid or mitigate a conflict of interest.

Position statement. Develop a brief position statement section. Describe your relationship to the problem, organization (if applicable), and potential participants.

Describe your views on this topic and problem and the strategies you will take to avoid imposing your bias on the proposed study and findings. This is an important subsection in terms of eliminating committee member’s questions about your position, biases, and potential conflicts of interest at the proposal conference call. It is far more productive to address these issues with committee members during the proposal development/approval stage than at the proposal conference call.

Does the Researcher’s Position Statement section?

	1. Identify any potential academic, financial or other personal interests that might compromise the objectivity with which their research is designed, conducted and reported.
	2. Disclose any personal relationships or financial interests that may present conflicts of interest
	3. Describe a plan to eliminate or manage potential conflicts of interest
	4. Describe strategies to avoid or mitigate a conflict interest

Summary of Chapter 3

Briefly summarize the salient points from chapter three. Your goal should be to reinforce to your reader how your choice of method, data collection and data analysis clearly align with the research problem and research question. This section should be brief but compelling. Remember a proposal proposes research to be conducted and you want your reader to conclude that your proposal (a) addresses a practical problem with researching, (b) has a stand-alone literature review that presents the current research knowledge regarding your topic/problem, and (c) is capable [via the methodology] of answering the primary research question and additional questions you are posing.

Does the Summary of Chapter 3 section?

	1. Summarize the salient points from Chapter 3
	2. Reinforce to the reader how the choice of method, data collection, and data analysis clearly align with the research problem and research question. Include transition to chapter 4 in description

CHAPTER 4. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study. It is a non-evaluative reporting of the data, including tables, figures and charts where applicable. If hypotheses or research questions guided the study, data are reported relative to each hypothesis or research question. This chapter should include analysis of the validity of the data, explanation of how the raw data relates to the questions asked in the study, and identification of sources of error and their impacts. Keep in mind that you should always introduce, present, and discuss the visual organizers used in this chapter. Never insert them without these three steps. It is often best to develop all the tables, graphs, and charts before writing any text for this chapter.

General questions to ask before starting to write Chapter 4:

1. Are there sufficient data to answer each of the research questions/hypotheses asked in the study?
2. Are there sufficient data to support the conclusions you will make in chapter 5?
3. Is the study written in the third person? Never use first person.
4. Are the data clearly explained using a table, graph, chart, or text?
5. All tables, figures etc must be formatted according to APA style
6. Full transcripts should not be included in the document, only excerpts as needed to illustrate the results.
7. Make sure the presentation of your results is aligned with your specific research design and data analysis strategy in chapter three.

The introduction to Chapter 4 should be brief. Include a description of your problem for the study, the research questions/hypotheses, the methodology, and a quick description of what will be covered in this chapter. Write this chapter in the third person (never use first person).

Does the Introduction section:

	1. Provide a brief introduction to remind the reader of the focus and purpose for the study?
	2. Provide the research questions and/or hypotheses? (Note: These can also be used to frame the presentation of the data.)
	3. Provide a brief description of the methodology used in the study?
	4. Provide a brief description of what will be presented in Chapter 4?

Description of the Sample

This section of Chapter 4 should describe the population of interest and the participants in your study. It should establish the number, gender, age, grade level (if appropriate) and setting (if appropriate) You may use graphic organizers such as tables and charts to provide further clarification and promote readability.

Does the Description of the Sample section:

	1. Describe the population (total group) of interest in the study?
	2. Describe the type of sample used in the study?
	3. Describe how the participants for the study were selected?
	4. Describe the sample size used in the study?
	5. Describe in fairly comprehensive fashion the setting for the study?

Summary of the Results

The length of this section depends on the study. Be sure to list the research question as you are discussing the points to ensure the readers see that the question has been addressed. Answer the research questions in the order that they are listed.

You may organize your results in several different ways. They are:

1. By hypothesis
2. By research questions
3. By chronology of variables
4. By themes and patterns
5. Other approaches felt appropriate according to study

Qualitative Studies

In qualitative dissertations, discuss and provide a table showing number of interviews conducted, duration of interviews, # observations conducted if any, duration, # of demographic data, # of occurrences of a code, frequency of themes, model created, etc.

Quantitative Studies

In quantitative dissertations, it is not required for all data analyzed to be presented but it is important to provide descriptive statistics and the results of the applicable statistic tests used in conducting the analysis of the data. It is also important that there are descriptive statistics provided on all variables. However, it is also acceptable to put most of this in the appendix if the chapter becomes too lengthy.

Required Components:

1. Descriptive Statistics: describe or summarize “Data sets”
 - a. Frequency distributions:
Example: You might use frequency distributions to describe the distribution for the IQ scores in your class of 30 pupils.
 - b. Graphical displays: Bar graphs, Histograms, Line Graphs, Scatter plots
 - c. Numerical indexes: averages, percentile ranks, measures of central tendency, correlations, measures of variability and standard deviation, measures of relative standing.
2. Inferential Statistics: describe the numerical characteristics of data, go beyond the data, and make inferences about population based of sample data. You estimate the characteristics of populations and test hypothesis about population parameters.
 - a. Sampling distributions
 - b. Estimation
 - c. Hypothesis testing

General questions to ask after your first draft:

1. Are the findings clearly presented where any reader could understand them?
2. Are all of the tables well organized and easy to read?
3. Are the important data described in the text?
4. Are the data organized by research questions?

Does the Summary of the Results section do one of the following, based on the purpose of your study?

	1. Identify who is affected and how (descriptive study).
	2. Identify what characteristics or phenomena are associated with the problem (prediction research).
	3. Describe the factors that contribute to the problem (explanation).
	4. Identify what programs and services are needed to address the problem (improve).

Detailed Analysis

This section presents the data and analysis of that data in a non-evaluative manner. It should include visual organizers such as tables, charts, and figures. If hypotheses or research questions guided the study, data can be framed relative to each hypothesis or research question. This section should include analysis of the validity of the data, provide an explanation of how the raw data relate to the hypotheses or research

questions asked in the study, and provide an identification of sources of error and their impact/influence on the data.

You can organize your data and findings in several different ways. They include:

1. By hypothesis
2. By research questions
3. By chronology of variables
4. By themes and patterns
5. Other approaches felt appropriate according to study

Describe the method you used to analyze the data that was collected for the purpose of this study. If you analyzed the data differently for each research question, then state such so that the reader can follow that each research question/hypothesis has been addressed.

Does the Detailed Analysis section:

	1. Provide hypotheses and/or research questions used in the study?
	2. Present the data collected in the study in a comprehensible manner?
	3. Include analysis of the validity/credibility of the data?
	4. Provide an explanation of how the raw data relate to the hypotheses or research questions?
	5. Provide an identification of sources of error and their impact on the data?

Summary

Provide a concise summary of what you found out as the conclusion of this chapter. The summary should provide a lead or transition into chapter five where you will discuss the results.

Does the Summary section:

	1. Present the findings clearly and in a manner that any reader can understand them?
	2. Describe all important data?
	3. Provide a transition to chapter 5?

CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

Chapter 5 is perhaps the most important chapter in the final dissertation manuscript because it presents the researcher's contribution to the body of knowledge and because for many who read research literature, this may be the only chapter they will read. It typically begins with a brief summary of the essential points made in Chapters 1 and 3 of the original research proposals, such as why the topic is important and how the study design contributes to our understanding of the topic. The remainder of the chapter contains a summary of the results, a discussion of the results, a discussion of the results in relation to the literature, limitations of the results, implications of the results for practice, recommendations for future research, and conclusion.

You may share studies not previously discussed in the study. These may be newer studies published since the chapter 2 literature review was written or studies relevant to the findings that may or may not have been anticipated. The last words of Chapter 5 should give the final enduring ideas or conclusions that you wish readers to keep when they are done. This should be presented in the simplest possible form, being sure to preserve the conditional nature of your insights.

Does the Introduction section:

	1. Explain the purpose for the study?
	2. Briefly identify the methodology and research design used in the study?
	3. Inform the reader about what Chapter 5 will do (its purpose)?
	4. Orient the reader to how Chapter 5 is organized?
	5. Describe how the chapter fits into the overall dissertation?

Summary of the Results

Provide a summary of your study, an overview of what the study was about. This could be organized by hypothesis or research question. If the summary is organized by hypothesis, then share your results for each hypothesis. If the summary is organized by research question, then provide succinct answers for each research question. Also include key conclusions that you made based on your results. Each conclusion should be listed after the summary for the result related to each hypothesis or research question. The language should clearly demonstrate that you are stating the conclusions.

Does the Summary of the Results section:

	1. Summarize the results by hypothesis (for quantitative studies) or research question (for qualitative studies)
	2. Describe the conclusions that have been made based on the findings?

Discussion of the Results

In this section interpret the results with the related literature [research and theory]. What do the results mean? What do the study's results mean in light of the problem or theoretical debate or controversy that drove the need for the study? What do the study's results mean in light of existing findings in the field? What might the results mean? Were the research questions adequately answered? Why did the study's results turn out the way they did?

Does the Discussion of the Results section:

	1. Interpret the results?
	3. Tell the reader what the results mean to the problem or theoretical debate that drove the need for the study?
	4. Tell the reader whether the research questions were adequately answered?
	5. Tell the reader why the study's results turned out the way they did?

Discussion of the Results in Relation to the Literature

Discuss the relationship between the results and the literature you reviewed in Chapter 2. Throughout chapter 5 there should be citations drawing connections between the results and the work of other scholars.

Does the Discussion of the Results in Relation to the Literature section:

	1. Provide citations drawing connections between what the results are and the work of other scholars?
	2. Describe how the findings confirm or disconfirm theoretical concepts, assumptions or expectations?
	3. Describe how the findings or results confirm or disconfirm the assumptions or expectations of that conceptual framework?
	4. Describe the theoretical ramifications resulting from the study's results or findings?
	5. Discuss the relationship between the findings and the literature reviewed?
	6. Describe how the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 aligns with and supports the findings?

Limitations

Having conducted and considered the results, you should be able to see the study from a new perspective regarding the limitations of the study. In other words, you should now have additional insight regarding the scope of the study, what it achieved and could not achieve, and the interpretation and implications of the results in terms of what the results can and cannot provide. Please note also that design limitations are a common cause of unexpected results. Describe the study's limitations. Your critical assessment in this section should lead to improvements that could be applied in future research.

Does the Limitations of the Results section:

	1. Describe the study's limitations?
	2. Provide additional insight to the reader regarding the scope of the study, what it achieved and could not achieve?
	3. Describe what could be changed to lead to improvements that could be applied in future research?

Implications of the Results for Practice

Identify the implications for practice in the area of specialization. Please note though that not all research studies will have implications or recommendations for practice. Any implications or suggestions or calls for change should be drawn directly from and supported by your study's results. Also, before making a generalization to the population at large from which the sample was drawn, consider the size, corresponding confidence levels and intervals, and representativeness of your sample. When discussing practice implications from the findings from a qualitative study, which lacks the sample size to generalize, make recommendations for change judiciously. Ensure those recommendations are drawn directly from the findings.

Does the Implications of the Results for Practice section:

	1. Tell the reader what the research implies and what could happen as a result of the research?
	2. Provide the reader with a clear understanding of the findings to the area of specialization?
	3. Discuss the implication for practice in the area of specialization?

Recommendations for Further Research

Write an introductory sentence followed by a numbered list of four to six recommendations. Use complete sentences. Support each recommendation with a full

explanation for why you are making it. Include the methodology and/or the design you think should be used for each recommendation. To help formulate each recommendation, ask yourself: What will happen as a result of this research? What does this research imply? What could possibly happen?

Does the Recommendations for Further Research section:

	1. Begin with a lead sentence that explains the purpose of the section?
	2. Provide recommendations for further research?
	3. Explain the rationale for each recommendation?
	4. Include the proposed research design for each recommendation?

Summary

Your summary must state concisely an overview of your findings and what you concluded from them. The conclusion should not present new information or ideas. Essentially, the conclusion is the summative finale of the dissertation.

Does the summary section:

	1. Provide a final summary of the answer to the research questions?
	2. Provide a closure statement to the dissertation as a whole?

Appendix A

Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval Form

Appendix B
Informed Consent Form

Appendix C.
Power Analyses for Sample Size Calculation (Quantitative Only)

Include a screen shot (graphic image) of the G*Power output.

Appendix D.
Copy of Instruments and Permissions Letters to Use the Instruments

This is a required Appendix.

Appendix E.

Additional Appendices

Additional appendices may include statistical results, interview transcripts, raw data (as appropriate), or other critical information pertinent to the dissertation. Consult with the chair on additional appendices appropriate for the dissertation.

REFERENCES

(References should be single-spaced, with a full space between entries. Use the ruler to create a hanging indent.)