

REQUIRED CONTENTS OF THE PH.D. DISSERTATION PROPOSAL
FOR URBAN AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

1. COVER PAGE:

The cover page must list the proposed title; your name; the University of Texas at Arlington, School of Urban and Public Affairs; Ph.D. in Urban and Public Administration; the names of the supervisory committee; and the date of submission (see attachment A).

2. ABSTRACT:

One to three paragraphs not to exceed one page which summarizes the basic structure of the proposal, including the research question/problem, hypotheses, universe, data collection and tests, as appropriate.

3. THE RESEARCH PROBLEM:

There must be a clear statement of the research problem. This is one of the most difficult aspects of research because it must be something that is of interest to you personally, acceptable to your advisor, important to the field and "doable" given your material and intellectual resources.

This section must begin with a one sentence statement of the problem. If it takes more than one sentence, you are probably unclear about the nature of the problem. It is important to note that some problems will be highly descriptive in nature (i.e., comparison of different methods of contracting for services). Other problems might focus on a problem which is more instrumental in nature (i.e., how can contracting out for services be increased?). Yet others might be in the hypothesis testing mode (i.e., there is no relationship between contracting out and the level of professionalization).

The importance of the research problem and its contribution to the field of knowledge must be made clear. This involves citation of "authorities" from the discipline. Evidence must be presented that you are working on a problem that is going to be regarded as significant.

See chapter 3, Paul D. Leedy, PRACTICAL RESEARCH, (N.Y.: MacMillan, 1989) 4th ed.

4a. THE MODEL OR CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OR THEORETICAL ORIENTATION:

Model, conceptual framework and theoretical orientation are terms that have been variously defined in the methodology literature without a great deal of precision. They all, however, suggest the great importance of developing or adopting a set of logically related abstract ideas which are central to your research problem. The principle issue here is the phenomena you are going to look at and the justification for looking at them. The presentation of the model must include a definition of key terms and relationships. Finally, the objectives of the study should be clearly stated.

4b. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE:

You should not have a separate single review of the literature. Rather, it is expected that when you are presenting the research problem, the model and procedures, you will find it helpful to review literature that is related. In effect then, there must be a review of literatures which are relevant to the particular area of the proposal.

5. PROCEDURES:

The distinguishing feature of academic research, compared to research by journalists and writers¹, is the care given to procedures. The appropriateness of the procedures depends directly on the conceptual framework and related research question. The first part of the procedures section of the proposal then must very briefly summarize the research problem and related model.

The procedures section must also include:

- a. the unit of analysis,
- b. the research design,
- c. the instruments and/or data sources,
- d. sampling strategy, if appropriate,
- e. the analytical techniques including statistical techniques if appropriate.

It is very important that each element of the procedures are explicitly linked to the research problem and related model.

6. ANNOTATED OUTLINE

See Attachment B

7. BIBLIOGRAPHY:

The bibliography should not be longer than one typewritten page. The purpose is to identify those works that are central for your problem.

8. TIMETABLE:

Prepare a table which specifies each stage of your work and the expected completion date. Obviously this can only be a "best guess" (see attachment C). The schedule should also include work done to the stage.

ATTACHMENT A

DISSERTATION PROPOSAL

Ph.D. in Urban and Public Administration
Institute of Urban Studies
The University of Texas at Arlington

TITLE: The Structural Implications of Markets and
Hierarchies

by

John Doe

Dissertation Committee:

Professor John Doe, Chair
Professor M. A. Smith, Member
Professor A. C. Green, Member
Professor J. D. Douglas, Member
Professor J. M. Beat, Member

ATTACHMENT B

ANNOTATED OUTLINE

Each dissertation proposal should contain an annotated outline as an attachment. In addition to the chapter title, a brief description of what will be included in the chapter should be specified. Although there are a variety of ways for organizing a dissertation, the following provides a sample guide.

Chapter 1 is usually entitled "Introduction," but one is free and in fact encouraged to use another title. Whatever the title, Chapter 1 does three things: 1) it tells the reader what you are going to do; 2) it tells the reader why you are going to do it; and 3) it tells the reader how you are going to do it. In regard to the first item, the dissertation should lay out the broad foundation in which the subject falls, but it should move quickly to the research question or research problem. One normally would expect to find a clear statement of the problem within the first five to ten pages. Second, this chapter explains why the study will be a contribution to the field of knowledge or how it will contribute to the resolution of some policy problem. (The fact that it hasn't been studied before is not a sound justification; in fact, it might indicate its lack of importance). Third, the chapter should conclude with an outline of subsequent chapters and their logical relationship. It also can include a brief discussion of the methodology.

Chapter 2 is the "theory" chapter but please do not entitle it "literature review." This chapter amplifies the first part of Chapter 1, and sets the stage for the model which the author finally adopts. A literature review only includes those works that directly relate to the research question; it is not, repeat not, a summary of all of the literature on the general subject. The author should make clear how each item relates to the research questions or problem.

Chapter 3 describes the model or theoretical perspective which the author will adopt. In a standard study, it would also operationalize the dependent variable and describe any scales which are used. It would typically define the universe and the data collection techniques and provide the reader with a description of the data, usually in the form of one-way frequencies (so as to establish the variability of the dependent variables. (In some studies, it is the independent variable which is the focus of our attention, and that is particularly true in policy studies and in evaluation the independent variable which is the focus of the study).

Chapter 4 which is frequently called "findings" generally specifies the hypotheses which are being tested, including a

discussion of the relevant literature which supports the hypothesis. (One could also examine and formulate rival hypothesis). How the independent variables are measured, including scaling techniques, are also discussed. For each independent variable, it is quite common to present the reader with one-way frequencies, again to establish the variability of the variable. The chapter would then devote considerable attention to the analysis and the appropriateness of any statistical techniques. The test results used for each hypothesis should be presented as well as the authors conclusion as to the meaning of the test.

Chapter 5 which is frequently entitled "conclusion" first summarizes for the reader what the dissertation did and briefly recounts the major findings. The author then can explore theoretical or policy implications of the study, what theories or policy assumptions the study calls into question and confirms. Finally, one can discuss further research, either in terms of new questions raised by the study or methodological issues (or both).

One should note that the chapter outline here assumes what can be called a standard quantitative study, but certainly others are permitted. In addition, while the outline only includes five chapters, some could be subdivided depending on the comprehensiveness of the dissertation. If, for example, there are a dozen or so hypotheses, the proposed chapter 4 would probably be divided. Or else the hypothesis may be grouped under two or more broad headings with each heading serving as a separate chapter but with each chapter following much the same format.

One final note: A dissertation should be complete, and that is why appendices are useful. If, for example, a questionnaire is utilized in data collection, it should be incorporated as an appendix. If some separate statistical technique was used to generate variables, such as factor analysis, it can be incorporated as an appendix. Thus, you should indicate in your outline what appendices you expect to include.

ATTACHMENT C
AN ESTIMATE OF THE WORK SCHEDULE

Preliminary study and reading	June-December, 1986
Begin intensive reading	January 1, 1987
Complete most of reading	March 1, 1987
Selection of Dissertation Committee	March 1, 1987
Begin proposal writing	March 1, 1987
Proposal draft to chair	May 1, 1987
Rewrite proposal	May 1, 1987
Copies of proposal to committee	May 15, 1987
Final approval of proposal by Committee	June 1, 1987
Begin data collection	June 21, 1987
Begin rewrite first three chapters	July 1, 1987
End data collection	August 10, 1987
End rewrite and send first three chapters to two members of committee	August 10, 1987
Begin data analyses	August 10, 1987
End data analyses	September 1, 1987
Begin writing results/discussion	September 1, 1987
Draft completed	September 20, 1987
Draft typed by	October 1, 1987
To Dissertation Committee	October 1, 1987
Begin rewrite	October 25, 1987
Defense of dissertation	November 1, 1987

Source: David Madsen, SUCCESSFUL DISSERTATIONS AND THESES (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1983).