

PHD DISSERTATION M A N U AL

**2**

**PhD Dissertation Manual**

January 2013

Capella University | 225 South Sixth Street, Ninth Floor | Minneapolis, MN 55402

**Table of Contents**

**Introduction............................................................................................................................................. 5**

**Chapter 1: Overview of the Dissertation Process ..................................................................................... 6**

Doctoral Program Coursework........................................................................................................................................6

Colloquia.....................................................................................................................................................................7

Dissertation Courseroom ...............................................................................................................................................7 ePortfolio ....................................................................................................................................................................7

Dissertation Milestones ................................................................................................................................................. 8

**Chapter 2: Understanding the Dissertation .............................................................................................. 9**

Defining the Dissertation ...............................................................................................................................................9

Types of Dissertation Research & Acceptable Methods..................................................................................................... 11

**Chapter 3: Mentee-Mentor Roles & Responsibilities .............................................................................. 12**

Role of Dissertation Mentee ......................................................................................................................................... 12

Role of the Dissertation Mentor .................................................................................................................................... 13

Mentor-Mentee Relationship ........................................................................................................................................ 14

**Chapter 4: Understanding the Dissertation Milestones.......................................................................... 15**

Milestone 1: Dissertation Committee ............................................................................................................................ 15

Milestone 2: Research Ethics Education Completion ....................................................................................................... 15

Milestone 3: Mentor Approved Research Plan ................................................................................................................ 16

Milestone 4: Committee Approved Research Plan .......................................................................................................... 16

Milestone 5: Scientific Merit Approval........................................................................................................................... 16

Milestone 6: Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval .................................................................................................. 17

Milestone 7: Pre-Data Collection Call ........................................................................................................................... 17

Milestone 8: Mentor Approved Chapter 1 & 2 ................................................................................................................ 17

Milestone 9: Mentor Approved Chapter 3, 4 & 5 ............................................................................................................ 18

Milestone 10: Committee Approved Dissertation ........................................................................................................... 18

Milestone 11: School Approved Dissertation ................................................................................................................. 18

Milestone 12: Format Editing Completed ...................................................................................................................... 19

Milestone 13: Final Conference Call ............................................................................................................................. 19

Milestone 14: Final Manuscript Approved...................................................................................................................... 19

Milestone 15: Manuscript Submitted for Publication ....................................................................................................... 20

Milestone 16: Dean’s Final Manuscript Approval ............................................................................................................ 20

**Chapter 5: Administrative Requirements .............................................................................................. 21**

University Policies ...................................................................................................................................................... 21

Doctoral Manual ......................................................................................................................................................... 21

**Chapter 6: Dissertation Success & Support Services ............................................................................. 22**

Dissertation Success ................................................................................................................................................... 22

**Chapter 7: Additional Resources ........................................................................................................... 23**

Research at Capella .................................................................................................................................................... 23

Research in Your Schools ............................................................................................................................................ 23

SMR Process Information ............................................................................................................................................ 24

IRB A to Z Handbook .................................................................................................................................................. 25

Format Editing Guidelines............................................................................................................................................ 25

I N TR O D U C T I O N

**Purpose of the PhD Dissertation Manual**

This manual is intended to support learners and faculty at Capella University in understanding the dissertation process. It provides an overview of the dissertation process and outlines sixteen “milestones” by which learner’s fulfill the academic and administrative requirements for the PhD degree at Capella University. The manual also describes in broad terms the roles and responsibilities of the learner, the mentor, the dissertation committee members, and university support staff.

In addition to the general requirements, individual schools and specializations may have additional requirements for dissertations or degree conferral not detailed here. Learners are responsible for the requirements detailed in this manual as well as for requirements of their school and specialization. Information concerning school specific requirements for dissertation, guidance for writing the dissertation, and additional resources to support the dissertation process are located in iGuide under [Research at Capella](https://campus.capella.edu/web/research-at-capella/home) and [Research in Your School](https://campus.capella.edu/web/research-at-capella/research-in-your-school).

Learners should be aware that the contents of this manual are subject to change without notice; learners are responsible for ensuring that their dissertations meet the guidelines outlined in the current version of the dissertation manual. Learners are encouraged to remain aware of updates to this manual as they continue through the dissertation process.

CHAPTER 1: OVERVIEW OF THE DISSERTATION PROCESS

As an institution, Capella University’s mission and philosophy has always been to extend access to high quality education with a clear focus on the learner and learning. Our Ph.D. scholar-practitioner model emphasizes the importance of connecting theory and practice and offers a constructivist synergy: the experiences that learners bring to their studies are the platform on which new knowledge can be built through dialogue and scholarly activity. The process of “becoming doctoral” represents a historically rich tradition of transitioning from being a consumer of knowledge to exploring one’s own character, intellectual

capacity, intelligences, identity, habits of mind, and overall developmental formation as an emergent knowledge producer. As a novice researcher, the dissertation experience represents a process that emphasizes learner development and growth as a reflective scholar-practitioner. The dissertation process has been designed to provide you an opportunity to train as researcher and to learn the knowledge, skills and thought process necessary to conduct independent research. Further, the dissertation serves to demonstrate your mastery of a discipline’s knowledge base, acquired professional skills and competencies, and aptitude in doing independent research in the future. In engaging this endeavor, you enter the research phase of your program and are dedicated to developing a dissertation that 1) advances knowledge in your field, 2) contributes to theory and 3) meets Capella University’s hallmarks of good research.

The dissertation is the culminating event of the PhD program at Capella University. Your doctoral coursework and colloquia help prepare the learner for the major research and writing effort that goes into a dissertation.

**Doctoral Program Coursework**

Doctoral Program Coursework provides the competency framework for each PhD program. While in courses, doctoral learners learned about relevant theories and research methods their program. As learners progress through their coursework they are building the skills necessary for independent research. Having completed their coursework, learners should be comfortable with the differences between qualitative and quantitative analysis, and understand the strengths and limitations of each. Learners should also understand key concepts and definitions related to research epistemology and recognize how problems in the field have been measured and analyzed.

The competencies learners acquire during their coursework are necessary but not sufficient to complete a dissertation. Colloquia support and strengthen the connection between coursework and the dissertation.

**Colloquia**

Colloquia are a required component of all PhD programs at Capella University. Colloquia provide unique, powerful opportunities to collaborate with faculty and peers, to acquire new knowledge, and to implement what is learned to help prepare learners for completing their dissertations. Each colloquia track occurs at a key point in the degree program so as to move learners from beginning researchers toward the independent researcher.

In the first colloquium, learners explore how to identify a research problem, to develop a research topic, and how to develop a literature review to justify the topic. In the second colloquium, learners craft a well-formed research question, select the correct methodology and research design to answer the research question, and begin developing a sampling strategy and plan for the dissertation. In the third colloquium, learners deepen the conceptualization of their dissertation topic and craft a preliminary full research plan.

**Dissertation Courseroom**

The dissertation learner will be placed in a dissertation courseroom. The mentor will be assigned as the courseroom instructor. Learners will use the courseroom as their main point of contact with their mentor and with their peers. Individual mentors will differ in their management of the courseroom; learners should contact their mentors or academic advisors with questions.

Learners are encouraged to network with their learner peers in the courseroom, as this is an excellent source of support during the dissertation process. One of the most commonly cited benefits of the academic community fostered in the courseroom is networking among learners. Learners are strongly encouraged to interact with their peers by offering and accepting feedback.

**ePortfolio**

The dissertation requires use of an electronic portfolio (ePortfolio) provided by Capella. Dissertation learners must save drafts, assignments and other artifacts to their ePortfolio to verify successful completion of their dissertation milestones. The ePortfolio travels with a learner from quarter to quarter, and can be updated at any time.

The dissertation courseroom is reset every quarter, meaning all information dissertation learners have submitted through the courseroom will be removed. To maintain a record of progress throughout the dissertation process, dissertation learners must upload copies of all written work, forms, and documents to their ePortfolio.

Complete information regarding the use and management of ePortfolio can be found at iGuide: ePortfolio

**Dissertation Milestones**

Every dissertation is unique, but the process of creation moves through a similar sequence of steps. Capella refers to these steps as milestones. Progress in the Dissertation is measured by progress through these steps. In the Dissertation Courseroom, each milestone is associated with a specific assignment.

Timelines for completing each Dissertation Milestone vary as dissertation learners progress at different rates. The speed of progress depends on the nature of the research plan and how quickly, carefully, and effectively the learner applies academic and research competencies to completion of Dissertation Milestones.

C HA P T E R 2 : U ND E RS T AN D I N G T H E D I S S E R T AT I O N

**Defining the Dissertation**

Programs leading to the PhD at Capella University train highly qualified scholar-practitioners to master a field of study and contribute to their discipline by advancing original research. PhD programs train scholar-practitioners for a variety of careers in research, education, administration, and professional practice. The PhD credentials imply that the holder has completely mastered a specific subject area and is capable of extending the body of knowledge by:

• Conducting independent, thorough, and comprehensive research.

• Exhibiting higher-level critical thought processes.

• Writing at a scholarly level.

All doctoral programs require course work, qualifying comprehensive examinations, and a demonstration of research competence: the dissertation. At Capella, areas of specialization appear on a doctoral learner’s transcript, but in reality, the subject of the dissertation establishes the academic area of scholarly expertise.

The dissertation is the culmination of a learning process that demonstrates a learner’s mastery and ability to conduct independent research: to ask a research question relevant to the practice or field of study, develop a systematic process of collecting and analyzing data to answer that research question, and interpret the findings in light of the related literature and current practice.

A dissertation is original research that generates new knowledge and conforms to conventions for academic integrity and scholarly writing. The quality of the final draft of the dissertation will be appropriate for publication.

Successful completion of the dissertation requires a number of crucial skills that together help the learner develop independent thought, judgment, and critical thinking faculties, while offering the opportunity to contribute original ideas to existing scholarship. The dissertation requires the learner to research and evaluate relevant reference materials to formulate pertinent questions and/or hypotheses, to design an appropriate research study to answer those questions or test the hypotheses, and to present findings in the form of a coherent scholarly manuscript of appropriate format. Completing a dissertation exercises organizational, writing, and research skills.

Original research means that the data collected and the interpretation of the data do not already exist in the knowledge base for the researcher’s field of study. The dissertation is an expression of the learner’s capacity to engage in the highest level of critical thought in order to make a substantive contribution to the theory or practice of the discipline or field of study. The dissertation is a logical extension of published research meaning that it is built upon existing research and theory. It extends that existing research and theory through the acquisition, analysis, and interpretation of new data.

Independent research does not mean working in isolation, however. In completing the dissertation, learners at Capella University work closely with their mentors and dissertation committees and complete a required sequence of milestones that will assist learners and their mentors in managing the dissertation process. Learners talk through their ideas with their mentors, committees, peer researchers, and other faculty members. To ensure that they progress efficiently and effectively, learners must actively participate in the dissertation courseroom and maintain close contact with their mentors to discuss the development of their projects and to receive feedback and advice.

Capella University’s dissertation is divided into five-chapters. The five chapters are as follows:

• Chapter 1. Introduction and Statement of the Problem

• Chapter 2. Literature Review

• Chapter 3. Methodology

• Chapter 4. Data Analysis and Results

• Chapter 5. Conclusions and Recommendations

These five chapters are preceded by a series of introductory sections that are collectively known as front matter. Front matter includes the title page, copyright page, abstract, dedication, acknowledgments, table of contents, list of tables and list of figures. The inclusion of some of these sections, such as the copyright, dedication, and acknowledgments, is at the discretion of the learner. Others, such as the list of tables and list of figures, are dependent on their presence in the manuscript.

A dissertation also includes a collection of supporting materials following the presentation of the main text. These materials are collectively known as end matter, which consists of materials outside the main body of the document that may furnish useful references to the reader. The end matter may include, but is not limited to, references and appendixes.

More information concerning contents and structure of each chapter of the dissertation can be found in school-specific

Dissertation Guidebooks in [Research in Your School in iGuide](https://campus.capella.edu/web/research-at-capella/research-in-your-school).

**Types of Dissertation Research & Acceptable Methods**

Types of dissertation research at Capella follow closely those found in the scholarly literature of learners’ disciplines or fields of study. Learners begin dissertation with the development of a research plan. Learners select and defend a research topic, question, design, and methodology. Selection of an appropriate topic, question, design, and method must be defensible on an academic basis rather than on a personal preference.

Research methods focus on the choice of information and tend to follow two lines of inquiry: deductive and inductive reasoning. Quantitative methods, those that present their results in the form of numbers, are typically confirmatory or deductive. Qualitative methods, those that present their results in the form of words or themes, tend to be exploratory or analytical, but some can be used to confirm specific hypotheses derived by deductive reasoning.

Each school has defined acceptable methods for dissertation. More information can be found in the school-specific Acceptable

Methods Documents in [Research in Your School in iGuide](https://campus.capella.edu/web/research-at-capella/research-in-your-school).

C HA P T E R 3 : M E NT E E - M E NT OR R O LE S & R E S P O N S I B I LI T I E S

Carrying out a dissertation project is not an effort of the learner working independently. Doctoral learners work under the supervision of their mentors, dissertation committee members, and other faculty who have expertise conducive to the success of the dissertation. For example, some faculty have strong skills in research design and data analysis, while other faculty are subject matter experts. In the end, however, learners are solely responsible for the quality and integrity of all aspects of their dissertation.

**Role of Dissertation Mentee**

Upon entering the dissertation phase of the PhD Program, the dissertation learner transitions to the role of mentee—an individual engaged in professional research who works with a faculty mentor to complete each of the dissertation milestones.

Mentees are expected to:

• Apply understanding about the research process in completion of each dissertation milestone

• Use Capella dissertation resources to develop a research plan and dissertation manuscript that aligns with school and

University requirements

• Dive deeply into the scholarly study of the literature, applying the skills and competencies accrued as a PhD learner

• Keep the principles of the ethical conduct of research at the forefront of research design and implementation

• Assess personal understanding of the research process and discusses areas of concern as well as researcher strengths with the mentor

• Seek referral information from the mentor and other academic support experts to address gaps in research knowledge and understanding

• Actively engage in seeking information about the dissertation process; Learn about the milestone sequence and maps milestone deliverables to a personal dissertation plan

• Engage regularly with mentors in the dissertation courseroom and adhere to expectations regarding frequency of communication, and the timelines for assignments and deliverables.

**Role of the Dissertation Mentor**

Each dissertation learner works with a faculty mentor to progress through the dissertation completion process. The mentor’s role is a combination of leadership and collaboration, direction and facilitation, coaching and challenging. The mentor role is dedicated to providing the mentee with the guidance and support that allows the mentee to consistently make progress toward dissertation completion.

Mentors are expected to:

• Provide research process guidance and direction throughout the dissertation process.

• Advise mentees about research plan requirements that ensure alignment with ethical conduct of research and school or specialization requirements. For example, mentors remind mentees about the tenets of ethical research design and when necessary, require changes to a research design to ensure that these tenets are honored;

• Direct mentees to resources available at Capella. Such referral may include University resources found on iGuide or school-specific resources

• Collaborate with mentees to promote consistent progress in milestone completion. For example, many external factors can influence how a mentee progresses toward milestone completion. The mentor, however, consistently follows-up with mentees to assess progress, help the mentee redirect focus, or to set due dates for deliverables.

• Providing critical feedback in a respectful, yet direct, manner on dissertation deliverables.

• Engage regularly with mentees in the dissertation courseroom and establish expectations with mentees regarding frequency of communication, regular check-ins, and mentor initiated contact to evaluate progress, provide feedback, and offer supportive guidance.

**Mentor-Mentee Relationship**

The dissertation is a scholarly research study completed by the mentee with the guidance, support and direction of the mentor. This working relationship is focused on one goal: the mentee’s completion of the dissertation. As each step in the dissertation development process is initiated, the mentee produces deliverables for mentor review and critique. As mentor feedback is returned, the mentee uses that guidance to clarify, strengthen, and finalize each dissertation element. It is this back and forth, iterative process that forms the backbone of the mentor-mentee relationship.

Key assumptions form the infrastructure for this pivotal working relationship:

• Mentee and mentor each bring specific competencies, skills and knowledge to the research study development collaboration. For example, mentees focus on a particular area of research interest while mentors provide guidance and direction to develop the research plan and dissertation.

• Mentees are independent researchers using the guidance, coaching, direction and support provided by the mentor to complete dissertation milestones.

• Mentors and mentees work together to ensure that communication channels are used and kept in good working order.

For example, confusion or lack of clarity about expectations of mentors or mentees signals a need to discuss solutions in a timely manner.

• Both mentor and mentee are committed to upholding the ethical principles for the conduct of research as integral to the dissertation process. This includes discussions about ethics as the research plan is developed or as part of the research implementation stage of the research study.

• Mentees recognize that the mentor has experience in dissertation completion, has expertise that the mentee can benefit from, and based on this, values and uses the advice provided as the dissertation development process unfolds.

Each mentor-mentee relationship is characterized by nuances of personality. As this relationship is formed, its effectiveness and maintenance requires a commitment on the part of both mentor and mentee to open, clear and consistent communication.

C HA P T E R 4 : U N D E RS T AN D I N G T H E D I S S E R T AT I O N M I LE S TO N E S

**Milestone 1: Dissertation Committee**

Overview: The dissertation committee reviews and approves the Research Plan, guides the research, approves the final dissertation, and participates in the required conference calls. The committee provides timely and competent guidance to you throughout the dissertation research and writing process.

Importance: The dissertation committee has overall responsibility for providing content, technical, organizational, ethical, and administrative guidance for you throughout the dissertation process. The dissertation committee members work collaboratively with the mentor (committee chair) to guide you as you continue to develop and strengthen your advanced academic skills to conduct a study for the dissertation. Committee members evaluate the dissertation Research Plan and manuscript to ensure that the work meets rigorous academic standards for quality and you meet the guidelines for ethical research, academic honesty, and academic writing and presentation.

**Milestone 2: Research Ethics Education Completion**

Overview: Completing research ethics training prepares dissertation learners to design a Research Plan that aligns with current ethical standards of research. In Milestone 2, learners complete a Human Subjects Research Course available through the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI). The course, consisting of 10 online modules, provides basic information on the ethical principles and federal regulations that protect human participants in research. Completion of CITI training ensures that researchers understand key concepts such as research misconduct, informed consent and conflict of interest. CITI

modules may be reviewed and quizzes retaken as many times as needed until a passing score is obtained. A minimum score of

85 percent correct overall is required for researchers to obtain a certificate of completion for the CITI modules. Submission of a

CITI Completion Report is required for completion of this Milestone.

Importance: Completing your research ethics training prepares you to design a Research Plan that aligns with current ethical standards of research.

**Milestone 3: Mentor Approved Research Plan**

Overview: Milestone 3 is comprised of two distinct parts. Part 1: Topic Approval. Submit your research plan to your mentor for feedback and approval. Your plan may require multiple iterations before mentor approval is obtained. Your mentor then submits the Topic Approval section of the Research Plan to CompsDiss. CompsDiss sends the Topic Approval section for official review. Your school’s designee returns the approved topic to CompsDiss, and CompsDiss returns the approved topic to your mentor.

Part 2: Mentor Research Plan Approval. Your mentor works with you to complete the remaining sections of the Research Plan. Once complete, submit the full Research Plan to your mentor for feedback and final approval. Your plan may require multiple iterations before mentor approval is obtained. Once the Research Plan is approved by your mentor, Milestone 3 is marked complete.

Importance: Your Research Plan specifically addresses all aspects of your proposed study and will be the outline of your dissertation research. The Research Plan forms the foundation of your study.

**Milestone 4: Committee Approved Research Plan**

Overview: For Milestone 4 your mentor shares the approved Research Plan with your dissertation committee (not including SMR reviewer) for review, feedback, and approval. Your plan may require multiple iterations before final approval from the dissertation committee is obtained. Once your Research Plan is approved by your committee, Milestone 4 is marked complete.

Importance: This step informs the committee of your proposed Research Plan, and provides the committee with an opportunity to ask questions and offer input to your work.

**Milestone 5: Scientific Merit Approval**

Overview: For Milestone 5, your mentor submits your mentor and committee-approved Research Plan to CompsDiss and Cc’s the SMR Lead for Scientific Merit Approval. CompsDiss sends the plan to the SMR Review Team Lead, who distributes it to the SMR Reviewer. The SMR Reviewer returns a Formal Review to your mentor and Cc’s CompsDiss and your entire Dissertation Committee. Your mentor shares feedback for revisions, you revise based on that feedback, and resubmit to your mentor. Once your mentor validates that concerns have been sufficiently addressed, he or she submits your plan to CompsDiss and the

process begins again. It typically requires multiple iterations before your Research Plan obtains SMR Reviewer final approval. Once the SMR Reviewer has approved your Research Plan, Milestone 5 is marked complete.

Importance: A demonstration of scientific merit in all Research Plans is a necessary condition for IRB approval.

**Milestone 6: Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval**

Overview: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) ensures that the rights of human research participants are respected. Three documents are key to determining whether research procedures are aligned with current ethical standards: the Belmont Report, the Code of Federal Regulations 45 part 46 (45 CFR 46), and the Capella Policies regarding Research.

Importance: Developing research procedures that comply with ethical and legal standards is critical to your development as an independent researcher. Researchers are responsible for adhering to these national standards as well as the specific research guidelines for their discipline. Ignorance is no excuse for the violation of human rights, and all researchers are responsible for policing their respective disciplines where research is conducted.

**Milestone 7: Pre-Data Collection Call**

Overview: For Milestone 7, coordinate and complete your pre-data collection conference call.

Importance: The pre-data collection conference call is an opportunity for you to present your approved Research Plan, ensure that both you and your committee understand the proposed methodology, and provide an opportunity for the committee to offer any guidance before you begin your data collection.

**Milestone 8: Mentor Approved Chapter 1 & 2**

Overview: For Milestone 8, complete and submit your Dissertation chapters 1 and 2 to your mentor. Your mentor provides guidance through this iterative process.

Importance: It is important to complete Chapters 1 and 2 in coordination with your mentor. Chapter 1 is essential in outlining the full background for your study. Chapter 2 is a comprehensive literature review supporting your research.

**Milestone 9: Mentor Approved Chapter 3, 4 & 5**

Overview: The purpose of Chapter 3 of your dissertation is to explain and justify the choice of research design, data collection and analysis, and detail the steps of the research design. Data analyses and results are presented in Chapter 4. In Chapter 5, you must evaluate your work, provide personal insight into, and interpret the results of your study.

Importance: Chapters 3, 4, and 5 represent the final stages before your completed work is submitted to the dissertation committee for review. Your critical thinking skills, research sophistication, and mastery of the content area of the dissertation topic are qualities that define your doctoral level training.

**Milestone 10: Committee Approved Dissertation**

Overview: For Milestone 10, your mentor approves and submits your dissertation to the committee for approval. It is important that you access your school-specific resources using the links below.

Importance: Throughout the dissertation process, your committee guides your work through an iterative process. At this time, you confer with your mentor to address committee feedback.

**Milestone 11: School Approved Dissertation**

Overview: For Milestone 11, your mentor submits your approved dissertation to the school for approval.

Importance: All dissertations are required to have school level approval. At this time, you confer with your mentor to address school feedback.

**Milestone 12: Format Editing Completed**

Overview: For Milestone 12, complete your format and style review.

Importance: Format style and review must be completed before scheduling your final conference call with your committee. Following the review, you confer with your mentor to address editor feedback.

**Milestone 13: Final Conference Call**

Overview: For Milestone 13, coordinate and complete your final conference call. Any remaining issues with the dissertation must be addressed prior to scheduling the call. The conference call may result in suggestions for future research or other aspects of the dissertation being added to the document.

Importance: The dissertation completion conference call is the forum for you to share the completed dissertation with the academic community. The dissertation completion conference call is an opportunity for you to present your research, collaborate with the members of the committee, and create new possibilities for future research.

**Milestone 14: Final Manuscript Approved**

Overview: For Milestone 14, submit your manuscript for final mentor approval. Milestone 13 involved your Final Conference Call with your dissertation committee. In the final conference call, you may have received feedback from the committee regarding revisions. Incorporate any revisions into the final manuscript.

Importance: Completing Milestone 14 is the final step before your manuscript is submitted for publication in Milestone 15. The document must be correctly formatted and accurate! Once published, your dissertation becomes a permanent and public record of your scholarship.

**Milestone 15: Manuscript Submitted for Publication**

Overview: For Milestone 15, submit your manuscript for publication.

Importance: Publication to ProQuest Dissertations & Theses is required for the Dean’s Final Approval.

**Milestone 16: Dean’s Final Manuscript Approval**

Overview: For Milestone 16, submit your manuscript for dean approval.

Importance: When the manuscript is ready for publication, Capella facilitates a final review of the dissertation for approval by the school’s dean. This is an internal process and does not require action from either the mentor or the learner. It is important that you access your school-specific resources using the links below.

C H AP T E R 5: AD M I N I S T R AT I VE R E Q U I R E M E N T S

Information related to Academic Standing and Satisfactory Academic Progress during the dissertation is located in the

University Doctoral Manual and in [University Policy 3.01.10 Doctoral Learners](http://www.capella.edu/inc/pdf/VCpolicies/3.01.10_Doctoral_Learners.pdf).

**University Policies**

Capella University recognizes that the completion of a doctoral degree requires the demonstration of unique competencies not present in other degree levels. This policy outlines and defines the procedures and requirements of these program components necessary for doctoral degree conferral. For more information on this policy, refer to [University Policy 3.01.10 Doctoral Learners](http://www.capella.edu/inc/pdf/VCpolicies/3.01.10_Doctoral_Learners.pdf).

**Doctoral Manual**

This document is a resource learners should consult throughout their doctoral studies and a companion to Capella’s University Catalog and university policy. All doctoral-level degrees are represented and organized by degree program. Each section indicates which components are required for a learner’s degree program (and specialization, where applicable), helping learners proactively navigate its specific requirements. Procedural information related to each degree program’s components and references to other key information will help learners avoid bumps in the road. For more information, refer to the Capella University Doctoral Manual.

C H A P T ER 6: D I S S ER TA T I O N S U CCE S S & S U P P O R T S E R VI C ES

**Dissertation Success**

By the time learners complete the dissertation, they will be independent doctoral researchers who regularly build on a foundation of theory and experience that contributes to their fields. A common challenge learners may face is staying motivated and connected with their advisor and mentor. Learners should visit the dissertation courseroom at least 3 times each

week, posting at least once per week. This way, learners will be creating a dialogue with their mentor. At times, learners might feel discouraged and need additional academic or personal support. It is critical that learners ask for help when they need it.

Learners have developed the study skills and critical thinking necessary to reach this point, but now they might need to modify them to get through the last part of the program. To support their success in the dissertation, learners should:

• Understand the requirements of the dissertation,

• Understand the dissertation process,

• Remain in frequent contact with their mentor and advisor

• Make use of the dissertation courseroom

• Utilize the many resources available to support their work in the dissertation. There are many helpful resources located in the dissertation courseroom and on iGuide.

C H AP T E R 7: AD D I T I O N AL RE S O U RC E S

**Research at Capella**

Capella University promotes excellence in research through a commitment to ethical principles for the responsible conduct of research. Ensuring the highest standards and protecting the rights and welfare of human research participants is a shared responsibility. You will find many helpful resources located in your dissertation courseroom and on iGuide under [Research at Capella](https://campus.capella.edu/web/research-at-capella). These resources will help you with designing, reviewing, conducting, and sharing research.

**Research in Your Schools**

You will find many helpful resources that are specific to your school located in your dissertation courseroom and on iGuide under [Research at Capella: Research in Your School](https://campus.capella.edu/web/research-at-capella/research-in-your-school).

Acceptable Methods

This document identifies and describes research methods and research designs that are acceptable for PhD dissertation research in your school. An acceptable PhD Dissertation is an original research study that is designed to advance scientific knowledge in the field. Be sure to refer to the Acceptable Methods for your School. More information about the Acceptable Methods for your school is available by visiting the “Research in Your School” area on iGuide and in your dissertation courseroom.

Dissertation Guidebooks

The purpose of the Dissertation Guide for your school is to assist learners in crafting dissertations that meet and exceed the requirements for excellence in scholarly research and to inform and encourage faculty dialogue on the conduct of research. While creativity in research is desirable, standards of scientific rigor, merit and the ethical conduct of research are vital. Be sure to use the Guidebook for your School. More information about dissertation requirements, process and procedures is available by visiting the “Research in Your School” area on iGuide and in your dissertation courseroom.

Dissertation Templates

PhD learners must use the correct template corresponding with their School in writing the dissertation. Be sure to use the Dissertation Template for your school. More information about the dissertation template for your school is available by visiting the “Research in Your School” area on iGuide and in your dissertation courseroom.

**SMR Process Information**

Scientific Merit Review (SMR) is intended to make sure a study will contribute something beneficial to the discipline, field or knowledge base, or, in the case of action research, that the proposed intervention is sound. SMR requires attention to these types of questions:

* Is this a meaningful topic and significant research question? Will seeking an answer to this question benefit the field? Society? The community or organization? Participants?
* Is there adequate literature or preliminary data to justify this research?
* Is the research design sound? Can the research design answer the research question? Has an appropriate methodology been selected?
* Is the sample selection appropriate? Is the sample size appropriate?
* Has the researcher selected appropriate instruments? Are they credible, valid and reliable? Have they been used with this population?
* Is the plan for data analysis appropriate?
* Specific questions relating to scientific merit may vary depending on the nature of the discipline and the type of research proposed.

Capella’s doctoral learners participate in scientific merit review as part of the school approval process. More information about SMR requirements, process and procedures is available by visiting the [Research in Your School](https://campus.capella.edu/web/research-at-capella/research-in-your-school) area on iGuide and in your dissertation courseroom.

**IRB A to Z Handbook**

The [IRB A–Z Handbook](http://www.capella.edu/iGuidePA/PDF/academics/IRB-AtoZ-Handbook.pdf) is your source for information on the IRB process and provides a step by step guide of the process, including information for using Capella's online submission system. Consult this guide at each stage of the process. More information about the IRB process and requirements is available by visiting the [IRB Process](https://campus.capella.edu/web/research-at-capella/review/irb-review/irb-process) area in Research at Capella on iGuide and in your dissertation courseroom.

**Format Editing Guidelines**

The dissertation manuscript is a permanent document that reflects on the writer, the school, and the university. The purpose of these formatting guidelines and the format editing process is to ensure that the presentation of the dissertation matches the same high quality of the research and scholarship that went into writing it. The [Dissertation Format Guidelines](http://www.capella.edu/iGuidePA/PDF/academics/Dissertation_Format_Guidelines_6th.pdf) address content when it concerns appropriate appendix items, citations of copyrighted material, and protection of research subjects. More information about the format and editing process is available by visiting the  [Format Editing](https://campus.capella.edu/web/research-at-capella/review/format-editing-review) area in Research at Capella on iGuide and in your dissertation courseroom.