



DOCTOR OF EDUCATION
IN EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

DISSERTATION HANDBOOK
Established 2016

Requirements & Procedures

Azusa, California
Fall 2024

Edits/Updates since 2016

This does not include editorial edits, such as spelling, numbering, fonts, formatting, etc.

Date	Page #	Edit
10/2016	38, 39	Moved from 6-chapter to 5-chapter dissertation format
10/2016	21	Updated oral defense date requirements
09/2017	23	Updated dissertation bound copy requirements
06/2019	1-25	Updated procedures and simplified sections (removed extraneous information, etc.)
08/2021	1-25	Updated to reflect new APU department names & procedures, added hyperlinks
08/2022	1-25	Updated course prefixes (from EDUC to EDL), updated Graduation Application form name
06/2023	14	Added information on and hyperlinks to the Dissertation Milestone Resource Center (Canvas course)

AZUSA PACIFIC UNIVERSITY MISSION STATEMENT

Azusa Pacific University is an evangelical Christian community of disciples and scholars who seek to advance the work of God in the world through academic excellence in liberal arts and professional programs of higher education that encourage students to develop a Christian perspective of truth and life.

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION Ed.D. in Educational Leadership MISSION STATEMENT

The Ed.D. Program in Educational Leadership at APU, a Christ-centered university, enables culturally aware K-12 leaders to implement research-based practices as change agents.

Core Values of the Ed.D. Program

1. A Christian worldview
 - Nurturing people of character and integrity
 - Encouraging global thinkers
2. Research that makes a difference
 - Rigorous, meeting the highest standards of the profession
 - Translating theory into practice
 - Immediately applicable to real-world settings
3. Recognizing diversity as a strength
 - Engaging in reflective practice
 - Shaping leaders who demonstrate a positive, respectful view of learners, their families, communities, and colleagues
 - Preparing graduates who cultivate a culture of equity
4. A commitment to mentoring students academically, personally, and spiritually
 - Welcoming them into the community of scholars
 - Providing the personal attention they need to progress through the program

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SECTION 1: INITIAL CONSIDERATIONS	1
1.1 <i>Characteristics of the Dissertation</i>	<i>1</i>
1.2 <i>Dissertation Options</i>	<i>1</i>
1.3 <i>Dissertation Quality Standards and Formatting</i>	<i>2</i>
1.4 <i>Dissertation Milestone Coursework (EDL 760 and EDL 770 through EDL 777).....</i>	<i>2</i>
SECTION 2: RELEVANT GUIDELINES AND PRACTICES.....	3
2.1 <i>Time Limit for Degree Completion</i>	<i>3</i>
2.2 <i>Time Limit for the Dissertation</i>	<i>3</i>
2.3 <i>Registration and Grades for Course EDL 777</i>	<i>3</i>
2.4 <i>Leaves of Absence.....</i>	<i>4</i>
2.5 <i>Protection of Human Subjects</i>	<i>4</i>
2.6 <i>Academic Integrity.....</i>	<i>5</i>
SECTION 3: RESOURCES	6
3.1 <i>Information Resources</i>	<i>6</i>
3.2 <i>Student Services</i>	<i>6</i>
3.3 <i>The Writing Center</i>	<i>6</i>
3.4 <i>Financial Assistance.....</i>	<i>6</i>
SECTION 4: THE DISSERTATION COMMITTEE	7
4.1 <i>Selection of the Dissertation Committee Chair and Methodologist.....</i>	<i>7</i>
4.2 <i>Selection of the Content Expert</i>	<i>7</i>
4.3 <i>Working with the Committee.....</i>	<i>7</i>
4.4 <i>Committee Review.....</i>	<i>8</i>

4.5	<i>Avoiding A.B.D.</i>	8
SECTION 5: POLICY ON OUTSIDE ASSISTANCE		9
5.1	<i>Assistance with Literature Search</i>	9
5.2	<i>Assistance with Instruments or Protocols</i>	9
5.3	<i>Data-Gathering Assistance</i>	9
5.4	<i>Statistics</i>	10
5.5	<i>Editing</i>	10
5.6	<i>Assistance with Writing</i>	10
SECTION 6: THE PROPOSAL MEETING		11
6.1	<i>Planning for Dissertation Research</i>	11
6.2	<i>The Dissertation Proposal</i>	11
6.3	<i>Proposal Content and Format</i>	11
6.4	<i>The Proposal Meeting</i>	11
6.5	<i>Approval of the Proposal</i>	11
6.6	<i>The Institutional Review Board</i>	12
6.7	<i>Advancement to Candidacy</i>	12
SECTION 7: CONDUCTING THE RESEARCH		13
7.1	<i>Permissions</i>	13
7.2	<i>Data-Gathering</i>	13
SECTION 8: CONTENT AND FORMAT OF THE DISSERTATION		14
SECTION 9: THE ORAL DEFENSE AND PUBLIC PRESENTATION		15
9.1	<i>Timing of The Oral Defense</i>	15
9.2	<i>Purpose of the Oral Defense</i>	15

9.3	<i>Approval of the Dissertation</i>	15
9.4	<i>Public Presentation</i>	16
SECTION 10: FINAL COPY OF THE DISSERTATION		17
10.5	<i>Revisions and Corrections</i>	17
10.6	<i>Check for APA Format</i>	17
10.7	<i>Publication</i>	17
10.8	<i>Fees</i>	17
SECTION 11: GRADUATION AND BEYOND		18
11.1	<i>The Graduation Ceremony</i>	18
11.2	<i>Degree Posting</i>	18
11.3	<i>Publications and Presentations</i>	18
SECTION 12: REFERENCES		19
APPENDIX A: DISSERTATION TIMELINES		20
APPENDIX B: DISSERTATION FORMS		22

SECTION 1: INITIAL CONSIDERATIONS

1.1 *Characteristics of the Dissertation*

The doctoral dissertation in educational leadership at Azusa Pacific University is to be a work of original research that contributes to the body of professional knowledge in the field. Although the difference between “thesis” and “dissertation” is debated, a dissertation is generally assumed to involve more depth and breadth than a thesis; to require a longer period of time; to give evidence of greater scope, independence, and originality; and to be conducted at a higher level of scholarship.

The purpose of the dissertation process is to ensure that candidates demonstrate competence in the skills requisite to independent research:

1. identifying and formulating a research problem and designing a plan for its study;
2. analyzing, synthesizing, interpreting, and discussing implications of the literature related to defined question(s);
3. executing the plan to gather data or information;
4. analyzing evidence critically;
5. discussing the study's implications for further research and professional service.

With guidance from the dissertation committee, candidates are expected to design, conduct, and report their research at a scholarly level.

As set forth by the Council of Graduate Schools (CGS), “Dissertation research should provide students with hands-on, directed experience in the primary research methods of the discipline and should prepare students for the type of research/scholarship that will be expected of them” after graduation (Council, 1991, p. 3). SOE Ed.D. candidates will typically conduct research in districts, schools, and classrooms to

1. evaluate instructional, curricular, and institutional policies and programs;
2. design, review, implement, or evaluate proposals for research with implications for their own organizations; and/or
3. locate and interpret research as a resource for decision-making.

Azusa Pacific University, cognizant of its responsibilities to its graduates and the students whom they serve, maintains high standards for dissertation work.

1.2 *Dissertation Options*

CGS defines the *traditional dissertation* as “a unified work with an introduction that states an objective, a literature review, a presentation of the methodology or procedures to be used, and a concluding discussion of results” (Council, 1991, p. 4). The Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate (CPED) defines the Ed.D. degree in this way: “The professional doctorate in education prepares educators for the application of appropriate and specific practices, the generation of new knowledge, and for the stewardship of the profession” (CPED, 2022).

Within this framework, the dissertation can be conducted as a qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods study; the type of study a student will engage in is a decision made in reference to the research question(s) and with the approval of the dissertation chair. Mixed methods studies are possible in certain cases with permission from the dissertation committee, though they are not generally recommended because of the length of time required to

adequately address both qualitative and quantitative aspects of the study.

1.3 *Dissertation Quality Standards and Formatting*

Whatever the form of inquiry, quality standards for dissertation research for the Ed.D. degree at Azusa Pacific University include:

1. a well-articulated rationale for why the study is needed;
2. an intention to answer a question or address a problem relevant to the field;
3. a demonstrated relationship to an existing theory or model;
4. clear research question(s) reflecting sound conceptualization;
5. a well-organized, thoughtful review of the relevant theoretical and research literature;
6. appropriate, rigorous, and internally consistent research design and methodology flowing logically from the purpose statement or hypotheses;
7. a research design that demonstrates rigorous inquiry;
8. clarity in reporting findings and results;
9. cogent interpretation for theory, policy, practice, and further research;
10. evidence of critical thinking at every step in the process;
11. discussion of the study's significance to the field and/or theoretical implications;
12. clear and concise writing with the adherence to APA 7th formatting requirements

1.4 *Dissertation Milestone Coursework (EDL 760 and EDL 770 through EDL 777)*

Within a dissertation-embedded model, the dissertation process begins the first day of the doctoral program, with coursework designed to facilitate development of research question(s) that can be explored with sufficient depth. All students will identify a research interest early in the program. Although actual data-gathering for the dissertation cannot begin before the proposal and Institutional Review Board (IRB) have been approved, some aspects of the research idea may be piloted beforehand as they fit the objectives of a course.

As a feature of the dissertation-embedded model, dissertation milestone courses included throughout the program support students at every stage of the dissertation process. In the first year of the program (EDL 760, 770, 771), these courses include the entire cohort with one instructor. In years two and three (EDL 772 through EDL777) the courses are led by each students' dissertation committee chair (see section 4.1) and include face-to-face informational workshops, individual dissertation supervision, peer consultation, and virtual resources. The dissertation milestone courses follow best practices of creating an intentional supportive community for doctoral students and encouraging the integration of core content with research.

After successfully completing all other dissertation milestone courses (EDL 760 and EDL 771 through EDL 776), Ed.D. students will continue to work with their committee in completing their doctoral-level research project in educational leadership. Students enroll for two units of dissertation credit (EDL 777) and must re-enroll each semester until successfully defended and approved.

SECTION 2: RELEVANT GUIDELINES AND PRACTICES

Students are responsible for knowing and following the standards and procedures set forth in the edition of the Dissertation Handbook for the Department of Educational Leadership corresponding with their year of entry into the program as well as the most current version of the [APU Style and Format Handbook for Dissertation and Thesis Publications](#).

2.1 Time Limit for Degree Completion

Doctoral students are permitted 6 years from the date of initial enrollment to complete all requirements for the Ed.D. degree. Extensions beyond this deadline due to unusual circumstances may be granted at the discretion of the Chair of the Department of Educational Leadership and the Dean of the School of Education. Students needing an extension must present their request in writing on an [Academic General Petition](#), stating the reasons for the extension and the expected date of degree completion.

2.2 Time Limit for the Dissertation

The dissertation must be completed, defended, and presented within the 6-year limit for degree completion. Progress toward completion must be assessed with the dissertation chair at least three times (or more, as determined by the chair) each semester.

A [Graduate/Professional Graduation Application form](#) must be filed with the Graduate Registrar's office according to their published due dates. In addition, students must have successfully defended the dissertation, attended to necessary modifications, presented it in a department-hosted public setting, received approval to publish from Graduate Student Publications, and submitted to the ProQuest database. See the appendices for a detailed timeline for the dissertation process, forms and instructions relative to key steps along the way.

2.3 Registration and Grades for Course EDL 777

As noted in Section 1, in the penultimate term of the program, and upon successful completion of all other dissertation milestone courses, candidates register for two units of dissertation credit in EDL 777. Candidates are required to continue to register for EDL 777 each semester until the dissertation has been successfully defended and approved to be submitted to an APU External Reader. Registration in EDL 777 enables candidates to access university resources, including faculty advisement time. EDL 777 is graded on a credit/no credit basis, dependent upon adequate progress toward completion of the dissertation.

Adequate progress of doctoral candidates is assessed each semester on all of the following expectations:

1. maintaining regular contact with the dissertation chair;
2. conducting research as described in the dissertation proposal; and
3. submitting high-quality drafts in a timely manner, consistent with the timeline established with the dissertation committee.

Candidates who receive “NC” for EDL 777 will need to submit a report on their progress in candidacy and will enter into a probationary period for one semester. Candidates

who fail to maintain progress after a probationary period may be recommended for termination from the program.

2.4 *Leaves of Absence*

Students who wish to interrupt dissertation work for a semester or more must apply for leave from the program through a [Leave of Absence form](#). Failure to register for more than two or more consecutive semesters without applying for leave is regarded as withdrawal from the program.

A leave of absence for a stated period of time not to exceed two years is available by petition to doctoral students in good standing who are making satisfactory progress toward the degree, and who must interrupt doctoral studies for a compelling reason (e.g., illness, study abroad, family conditions or crises, etc.). Requests for leave must be in writing and state both the reasons for the leave and the semester in which the student will re-enroll. Except in case of an unforeseeable emergency, application must be made in advance of the semester for which the leave is requested. Leaves of absence must be approved by the Chair of the Department of Educational Leadership and the Dean of the School of Education.

Students who fail to return to enrolled status at the end of an approved period of leave are considered no longer in pursuit of the degree; if they choose to continue their studies at a later time, they must reapply for admission to the program.

Typically, leaves of absence do not extend the total time available to students for completing the Ed.D. degree; however, in exceptional circumstances, extensions of the time limit may be granted in response to a petition at the discretion of the Chair of the Department of Educational Leadership and the Dean of the School of Education.

2.5 *Protection of Human Subjects*

Students are responsible for conducting research in a manner that protects the rights, privacy, and dignity of participants; recognizes the responsibilities of schools and other organizations to their students and clients; and reports findings accurately and thoughtfully. This requirement includes need to obtain permissions from individuals and institutions with whom research will be conducted as required by law, ethical guidelines, and professional courtesy.

In addition, federal law applies to research with human and animal subjects. In accordance with this law, Azusa Pacific University has an Institutional Review Board (IRB) that is responsible for reviewing investigations involving human subjects before any data are gathered. Candidates are required to submit an application to IRB to be granted approval for their research. Prior to this submission, candidates will complete a training program on ethical research provided by the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI). Guidelines and forms relevant to this process are discussed during coursework and may also be found via IRB Manager, which can be accessed from home.apu.edu. Application submissions to the IRB require approval of the dissertation chair and the Chair of the Department of Educational Leadership.

2.6 *Academic Integrity*

Academic dishonesty is a serious offense that diminishes the quality of scholarship and defrauds those who depend upon the integrity of the educational system. Consult the [Graduate APU Academic Integrity Policy](#) for definitions of cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, and plagiarism. According to university policy, students who engage in academic dishonesty may be in jeopardy of disciplinary action, including suspension or expulsion from the university.

When drawing from resources, students must provide citations and a reference list, all in accordance with the current *APA Style Manual*. All paraphrases and summaries should be identified with appropriate citations, and all borrowed ideas traced and attributed to their original source. Follow Mary-Claire van Leunen's advice (1992): "Quote only the quotable. Quote for color; quote for evidence. Otherwise, don't quote" (p. 46). In other words, paraphrase or summarize in your own words, with appropriate citation, unless there is good reason to quote verbatim.

Students are expected to do their own independent work. Even when a source is acknowledged with a citation, the following are not acceptable: (a) quoting verbatim without quotation marks, (b) a summary that essentially abridges someone else's words, or (c) a version that simply omits portions of the original, inserts some synonyms, or rearranges the original text. Note that paraphrasing that is too close to the original is a form of academic plagiarism, even if the author is cited.

Academic plagiarism includes, but also extends beyond, violation of copyright laws.

For material under copyright, students must obtain written permission to use long passages or a significant portion of a short work, visuals, tables, and the like. In case of questions, consult with your dissertation chair.

As described in detail later in Section 5 of this handbook, Ed.D. students may not use an editor, statistical consultant, research service, or similar assistance for any work turned in under their own name unless approved in advance by the dissertation chair and only to the extent approved.

SECTION 3: RESOURCES

3.1 *Information Resources*

Significant library holdings, particularly current research journals and government publications, are necessary to support the theoretical and research emphases inherent in any doctoral program. The university libraries offer an array of access to varied collections, rare archives, the extensive APU catalog and electronic resources. There is access to over 100 library information systems and multiple databases. These provide access to e-books, magazines, journals, newspapers, and many other information sources. Multi-Databases in Education, Business, Sciences, Social Sciences, Humanities, Health Services, General/Multi-Disciplinary, Theology/Religion, the Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), WorldCat, Periodical Finder, to name a few. Non-APU owned books are accessed via the Inter Library Loan (ILL) program.

Librarians are available for students during open hours, and the library provides a dedicated librarian with expertise to assist students within the School of Education (see <https://www.apu.edu/library/help/specialists>). Students can chat with a librarian after hours via the APU library's home page at apu.edu/library.

3.2 *Student Services*

Students who require special services due to disabilities, illness, or other issues should contact the [Accessibility and Disability Resources](#) department as soon as possible to discuss possible accommodations. Appropriate documentation is required for these services. Additional student services, including co-curricular and academic support services, can be found in the Graduate Catalog.

3.3 *The Writing Center*

The Writing Center can be particularly helpful for students needing ongoing support for the doctoral-level writing required in their coursework and dissertation process. Doctoral-level writing consultants are available to work with any enrolled doctoral student, including students who might require assistance in developmental or foundational writing. Writing Center appointments can be conducted online in real-time and via paper submissions and responses. Doctoral students interested in making appointments should call the Writing Center at (626) 815-6000 ext. 3141 or visit www.apu.edu/writingcenter.

3.4 *Financial Assistance*

In addition to the financial assistance offered through [Graduate Financial Services](#), three scholarships are available to students in the Ed.D. in Educational Leadership program: the [Dr. Lillian B. Wehmeyer Scholarship](#), the [Henck Endowed Scholarship](#), and the [Simmerok Family Encouragement Scholarship](#). For more information, visit the [Education Scholarships](#) page.

SECTION 4: THE DISSERTATION COMMITTEE

4.1 Selection of the Dissertation Committee Chair and Methodologist

The Ed.D. Program Director serves as advisor to newly admitted students, guiding cohort members through early decisions in the program. However, once a student is assigned a dissertation chair, that faculty member becomes the academic advisor.

The dissertation committee consists of three members who guide the candidate during selection of the research problem, development of the dissertation proposal, and completion of the process. Two of these faculty members are chosen from among the full-time doctoral faculty within the Department of Educational Leadership. Normatively, these members serve in the chair and the methodologist roles, respectively; however, they may also be configured with one serving in a combined chair and methodologist role and the other serving in a second reader role. Students request their preferred chairs and methodologists based on research specialty and expertise related to the area under study. The candidate proposes his or her intended topic along with a first and second choice for the roles of chair and methodologist. The Ed.D. Program Director, in consultation with doctoral faculty, makes the final determination on dissertation chair assignments based on faculty workload and students' proposed topic areas.

4.2 Selection of the Content Expert

The third member of the dissertation committee serves in the role of content expert. The content specialist must hold a doctoral degree from a regionally accredited university, and should have demonstrable expertise in the topic of the dissertation, both from a research and practice standpoint. It is the responsibility of the students to find their content experts selected for their relevant research interests and expertise, in consultation with their chair. Once the content expert is determined, the department will send a Content Expert form (see Appendix B) along with the intended content expert's curriculum vitae (CV) or resume, which is provided by the candidate, for approval by the two faculty members who sit on the candidate's committee as well as the Program Director.

4.3 Working with the Committee

The committee process is intended to provide students with the guidance of an expert team. Typically, the dissertation chair works with the student initially and indicates when sufficient clarity has been attained in any given portion of the dissertation so it is ready for review by other committee members.

The student has primary responsibility for establishing and meeting a timeline, for checking on deadlines and procedures, and for initiating and maintaining regular communication with the dissertation chair primarily, and other committee members as needed. The dissertation is not simply turned in on a particular date and graded; rather, each chapter must be revised repeatedly until it meets the standards set forth elsewhere in this handbook and in standard texts on research methodology.

The timeline should allow adequate time for reading and revision by both faculty and the student. A careful reading of a single chapter involves significant hours of work, and a

turnaround time of one to two weeks should be expected. Therefore, the student does well to work on other aspects of the dissertation while waiting for material to be returned. Such courtesies as using spell check and responding to every suggestion or question, even if only to ask a question or indicate why a suggestion is *not* accepted, are appreciated by faculty. When making revisions based on committee members' feedback, candidates should use tracked changes or the equivalent so that committee members can review the changes easily.

4.4 *Committee Review*

Throughout the process, candidates should expect that the chair or other members of the committee may ask to review samples of their work such as the literature search, raw data, and statistical analysis.

4.5 *Avoiding A.B.D.*

Across the nation, many students fail to move beyond A.B.D.—All but Dissertation. Faculty at Azusa Pacific are committed to assisting students in completing their research, writing up the results, and proceeding to graduation. Individual meetings, group meetings, email, and other modes of encouragement and assistance are available. In the final analysis, however, the student is ultimately responsible for completing the dissertation and meeting the quality criteria of the university.

SECTION 5: POLICY ON OUTSIDE ASSISTANCE

Dissertation research is the independent, scholarly work of a single candidate working under the direction and with the assistance of his or her appointed committee. Outside help is to be obtained only with *prior* knowledge and consent of the dissertation chair and is to be reported to the committee. This requirement applies even to the instances cited below that are generally acceptable. The Ed.D. Program Director will contact anyone who might provide such help to explain university policies.

To clarify further, “independent” might be contrasted with “cooperative,” dividing up tasks, or “collaborative,” working together so that the product blends the work of the participants. Neither cooperative nor collaborative dissertations are acceptable. However, this policy is not intended to preclude obtaining feedback from peers and faculty.

5.1 Assistance with Literature Search

In particular, the literature search is to be carried out personally by the individual candidate. Candidates may seek advice from a doctoral faculty member or reference librarian at Azusa Pacific as to sources and search strings. They may seek assistance in obtaining information from a database to which the university does not provide student access. Once citations have been located, clerical assistance may be employed to obtain hard copies, if needed. A clerk may also be asked to contact organizations or individuals to obtain routine information, but not to gather information relevant to the purpose or questions guiding the investigation.

5.2 Assistance with Instruments or Protocols

Instruments or protocols may be developed by the candidate, replicated or adapted from existing research (with permission of the author(s)), or selected and purchased from available commercial instruments—as appropriate and approved by the candidate’s committee.

5.3 Data-Gathering Assistance

Under some circumstances, help may be obtained with routine data-gathering procedures following a protocol. For example, a short-answer questionnaire may be administered by a clerk or qualified research assistant who has been trained by the candidate, who in turn is responsible for training such assistants and monitoring their honesty and consistency in the execution of the protocol. Pre-existing data from a school or district office may be gathered by a clerk at that school or district. (Candidates must obtain all necessary permissions before gathering and using student data, even within their own institution.)

Barring exceptional circumstances, interviews must always be conducted by the candidate. Interviews may be transcribed by an outside transcriptionist, but the transcript must be checked against the audio recordings by the candidate. Data analysis must be done by the candidate.

5.4 *Statistics*

Outside help may be employed to enter and list data, as long as the candidate has examined the raw data and works closely with the data entry person to be sure any ambiguous responses are appropriately handled. Candidates may consult a statistician for suggestions on choice of statistics, interpretation of printouts, and report formats. However, students must choose and apply statistical or other analytic procedures to their data, explain why they have selected those procedures rather than others, and authoritatively interpret the results.

5.5 *Editing*

Candidates may not employ an outside editor, unless previously approved by the chair (note: this does not apply to the APU External Reader who is required to approve the final manuscript). Chairs assume responsibility for directing the student in whatever content or copy editing is needed. Typists may cast handwritten tables into typed format.

5.6 *Assistance with Writing*

Candidates who would find assistance with writing helpful may contact the Writing Center, as noted above, for ongoing tutoring and feedback on their writing. However, all written work on the dissertation must reflect the original thoughts and words of the candidate. No portion of the dissertation may be written by another person, including a writing coach.

SECTION 6: THE PROPOSAL MEETING

6.1 *Planning for Dissertation Research*

The dissertation process encompasses developing and defending a proposal, conducting and reporting the research, and an oral defense and public presentation of the completed work.

Students are expected to prepare an action plan for dissertation work in collaboration with their dissertation chair. For most candidates, the dissertation calls for more sustained academic work than they have previously experienced. Thus, it is critical that candidates set interim deadlines and that these be reviewed regularly with the dissertation chair and updated as needed.

6.2 *The Dissertation Proposal*

Prior to beginning data collection for the dissertation research, candidates prepare a research proposal. Proposal development occurs in terms 1, 2, 3, and 4, as students receive guided support in developing their introduction, literature review, and research methodology, which are revised to form chapters 1-3, respectively, of their dissertation. In *EDL 772 Dissertation Milestone: Finalizing the Proposal*, taken in term 4, students work with their chair and other committee members to refine the proposal. When the dissertation chair and committee consider the research proposal sufficiently developed, the proposal meeting is held, providing an opportunity for the candidate and the committee to review the proposal together.

6.3 *Proposal Content and Format*

Because the proposal constitutes the basis for chapters 1-3 of the dissertation, the content and format will be generally drawn from the dissertation template documents. However, the specific format of individual proposals and dissertations are negotiated with the chair. The dissertation proposal conforms to the requirements of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (American Psychological Association, 7th ed., 2019).

The proposal must be written in English. Care must be taken in use of verb tenses; in particular, research findings still accepted as true are stated in the present tense, while those that have been superseded are expressed in the past tense. Actions taken by other researchers are also expressed in the past tense. Actions to be taken by the student-researcher in order to conduct the proposed study are in the future tense.

6.4 *The Proposal Meeting*

The purpose of the proposal meeting is to enable the committee and the student to engage in dialog with a view to clarifying and strengthening the proposal. Prior to arranging the proposal meeting, the chair must approve the proposal for review by the committee, indicating that the proposal is ready for defense. The dissertation chair will identify a mutually convenient time for the committee and arrange with the Doctoral Program Manager for a room.

6.5 *Approval of the Proposal*

To be approved, a proposal must meet standards of sound research and ethical inquiry.

The committee may approve the proposal at the first meeting, or the student may be asked to submit changes before committee members sign the approval form, or the student may be asked to make changes and schedule another proposal meeting. See Appendix B for the Proposal Approval Form which is sent by the department and signed by all members of the dissertation committee.

6.6 *The Institutional Review Board*

The proposal, including any instruments—questionnaires, checklists, interview protocols, or the like—must be approved by the full committee as well as the Chair of the Department of Educational Leadership for review and approval. IRB applications based on the approved research design from the proposal must be approved by the Institutional Review Board before data-gathering may begin. Students will use apu.my.irbmanager.com to submit their IRB application.

6.7 *Advancement to Candidacy*

Students advance to candidacy after approval of the dissertation proposal by the dissertation committee.

Upon advancement to candidacy, the student is entitled to write “Ed.D. Cand.” after their name.

SECTION 7: CONDUCTING THE RESEARCH

7.1 *Permissions*

All appropriate permissions, individual and institutional, must be obtained in writing prior to conducting research. These signed permission forms must be retained by the student and the dissertation chair until three years after the publication of the dissertation. Note that institutional (site) permissions are required for IRB approval. In cases where site will not grant permissions without IRB approval, a conditional permission letter may be obtained. Candidates can consult their chairs and/or IRB Manager for sample permission letters and consent forms.

7.2 *Data-Gathering*

Students may not begin to gather data until both the proposal and any instruments have been approved by the dissertation committee and the university's Institutional Review Board. In addition, all personal and institutional permissions must have been obtained.

Research is to be conducted and reported honestly and ethically. The student is responsible for consulting with the dissertation chair at every step in the research process and with other committee members as needed to avoid errors or irregularities. Care must be taken in analyzing and interpreting the material gathered in the investigation to ensure that the conclusions are logically defensible.

SECTION 8: CONTENT AND FORMAT OF THE DISSERTATION

The Dissertation Templates provided by the Ed.D. in Educational Leadership Program provide a starting point for understanding the content of each chapter. They also provide formatting requirements in accordance with the *APU Style and Format Handbook for Dissertation and Thesis Publications*. Students should enroll in the Educational Leadership Program's Dissertation Milestone Resource Center at <https://canvas.apu.edu/enroll/BT33Y4> to access their relevant template according to their methodology: qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods.

In checking the formatting for the dissertation, students may enroll in the Canvas course, "Publishing Dissertations and Theses," at <https://canvas.apu.edu/enroll/DKE3EH>, to consult the current *APU Style and Format Handbook for Dissertation and Thesis Publications*, as well as other documents relevant to the publication process. The handbook describes the formatting requirements for margins, pagination, font, spacing, indenting, justification, tables, and figures. It also provides instructions for the ordering of front matter (including the title page, copyright page, dedication, acknowledgements, abstract, table of contents, table of tables, and table of figures), chapters (including headings and subheadings), and end matter (including references and appendices).

As with the proposal, the dissertation must be written in English. Verb tenses generally follow the same pattern as well: research findings still accepted as true are stated in the present tense, while those that have been superseded are expressed in the past tense. Actions taken by other researchers are also expressed in the past tense. However, at this stage, any verbs describing the dissertation study will now appear in the past tense.

SECTION 9: THE ORAL DEFENSE AND PUBLIC PRESENTATION

9.1 *Timing of The Oral Defense*

The oral defense occurs after the chair (often in consultation with the methodologist) has agreed that the dissertation is ready for defense.

To allow time for the involvement of an APU External Reader and to ensure timely completion of corrections, the defense should be requested during the spring or summer semester of the third year of the program. If the defense is not successfully completed by the end of the third summer term, the student must continue to enroll in EDL 777 until the defense is successfully completed and the dissertation is approved. The student is normally responsible for contacting committee members to obtain possible times and to arrange with the Doctoral Program Manager for a room. The program posts deadlines for successful defense and approval (see section 9.3) of the dissertation each spring semester, and candidates should refer to this document for those specific dates.

9.2 *Purpose of the Oral Defense*

The purpose of the oral defense is:

1. for the candidate to formally present his or her research to the committee;
2. for the candidate to demonstrate understanding of the dissertation research procedure, findings, and implications;
3. for the committee to evaluate the dissertation in order to determine if further revisions are necessary and if the candidate may proceed to graduation.

The meeting is closed and attended by the candidate and the committee. The chair of the Department of Educational Leadership, director of the Ed.D. program, and the dean of the School of Education are also invited. Others are admitted only with advance approval of the candidate and the dissertation chair.

The dissertation should be in final form before the defense, though candidates should expect the committee to require revisions to their work. Additional revisions may also be requested by the APU External Reader in order for the dissertation to conform to APA style or format as well as the *APU Style and Format Handbook for Dissertation and Thesis Publications*.

9.3 *Approval of the Dissertation*

The committee must unanimously approve the dissertation as a scholarly research contribution. The committee may approve the dissertation at the meeting, or the student may be asked to submit changes to the chair or the entire committee before the approval page is signed by the committee, or the student may be asked to make changes and schedule another oral defense. The committee members will sign a Dissertation Approval Form which is sent by the department (see Appendix B).

9.4 Public Presentation

After the oral defense, candidates are required to make a public presentation of their work at an event hosted by the department of Educational Leadership. The focus of the presentation is to be what the student has learned. The committee and members of the public are invited to ask questions at the conclusion of the presentation. Friends and relatives of the candidate, the Azusa Pacific University community, and members of the public are invited. The presentation is to be completed before degree posting and commencement.

SECTION 10: FINAL COPY OF THE DISSERTATION

10.5 Revisions and Corrections

Following the defense, the candidate makes necessary modifications in the written dissertation as requested by the committee. These modifications are approved by the dissertation chair and any other member of the committee who wishes to review them. This should occur promptly, since several steps remain before the student will be approved to participate in a commencement ceremony.

10.6 Check for APA Format

Once the committee-requested corrections are completed and approved, the corrected manuscript is then submitted to the APU External Reader, who checks the dissertation for compliance with the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* and university guidelines. Any departures from standard APA format that are desired by the candidate and dissertation chair must be communicated to the reader by the chair.

The student is responsible for the APU External Reader's fee. Each APU External Reader determines their fee structure and will bill the student directly for services rendered.

The chair-approved manuscript is reviewed by the APU External Reader and returned to the candidate for correction. The student may choose to have the APU External Reader make corrections at the student's expense. When completed, the final copy is signed off by the Reader and returned to the student. The Reader sends an approval email to the Director of Graduate Student Publications and the Doctoral Program Manager. The Director of Graduate Student Publications will respond to the student with the next steps for publication.

10.7 Publication

The final manuscript (approved by the APU External Reader) is submitted electronically to the Director of Graduate Student Publications, who reviews it for conformity to the *APU Style and Format Handbook for Dissertation and Thesis Publications*. If further edits are required, the student is notified and must make the final changes requested.

The student is responsible for completing all forms for publication by ProQuest. Although they need not apply for copyright, students may wish to do so. The Director of Graduate Student Publications will provide instructions for this process.

10.8 Fees

Students must pay a fee for submission to ProQuest/Dissertation Abstracts, and (optional) copyright. If students wish to obtain a bound copy, they will have to pay an additional fee to ProQuest for that service. Note that fees are determined by ProQuest and may change without notice.

SECTION 11: GRADUATION AND BEYOND

11.1 The Graduation Ceremony

A [Graduate/Professional Graduation Application form](#) must be filed with the Graduate and Professional Registrar's office according to their published due dates. Students will be approved to graduate only after the dissertation has been approved by the APU External Reader and students have met all other program requirements, including public presentation of the study.

11.2 Degree Posting

The degree is not posted on the transcript of a candidate until the 1st or 15th of the month following the date when all program requirements have been met (typically, the date of the public presentation), as long as all department and other fees have been paid. Degree posting dates conform to those stated in the Graduate Catalog.

After the degree has been posted to the student's transcript, correspondence to the graduate is properly addressed with Dr. preceding the graduate's name. In signing correspondence, the graduate uses the letters Ed.D. after their name.

11.3 Publications and Presentations

Students are encouraged to report their research at conferences and in professional journals. Faculty welcome opportunities to suggest appropriate venues for publication and to advise students in preparing their material for presentation or publication.

Students who publish aspects of their dissertation should appropriately acknowledge assistance from their committee, and particularly their chair, by means of joint authorship or acknowledgement in their presentations and publications. As noted in the *Publication Manual American Psychological Association 7th ed.* (2019), the student should always be listed as the first author.

Members of ACSA (Association of California School Administrators) are encouraged to prepare a two- to three-page summary of the dissertation and submit it, along with a photograph, present job title, and job location, to the editor of EdCal.

SECTION 12: REFERENCES

- American Educational Research Association. (2000). *Ethical standards of AERA*. Author.
<http://www.aera.net/about/policy/ethics.htm>.
- American Psychological Association. (2019). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (7th ed.). Author.
- Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate (2022). The CPED framework.
<https://www.cpedinitiative.org/the-framework>
- Council of Graduate Schools. (1991). *The role and nature of the doctoral dissertation*. Author.
(ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED331422)
- Van Leunen, M-C. (1992). *A handbook for scholars* (Rev. ed.). Oxford University Press.

APPENDIX A: DISSERTATION TIMELINES

The Dissertation Timeline

Year
1

Fall: EDL 760 — Proposal A

- Explore key aspects of the research process, focusing on question formation and literature search/review.
- Begin to develop Chapter 1 in consultation with instructor and chair (who is assigned mid-semester).

Spring: EDL 770 — Proposal B

- Further hone the research question and purpose statements; explore, review, and analyze current literature.
- Develop Chapter 1 and begin Chapter 2.
- Meet with chair to discuss developments in the proposal .

Summer: EDL 771 — Proposal C

- Hone skills necessary to craft an excellent literature review.
- Continue to develop Chapters 1 and 2.
- Meet with chair to discuss developments in the proposal.

Fall: EDL 772 — Finalizing the Proposal

- Submit Content Expert Request Form by midpoint of term.
- Meet with Chair at least 4 times, and consult methodologist as directed by chair.
- Develop Chapter 3 and finalize the proposal. Submit drafts per the timeline developed with the chair.
- Hold proposal meeting by final week of term.
- Submit IRB application after proposal is approved. Note that site permissions are required PRIOR to IRB application.

Spring: EDL 773 — Data Collection

- Revise proposal per committee recommendations as directed by the chair.
- Initiate data collection after IRB approval is granted, following the timeline developed with the chair.
- Meet with chair at least 4 times, consulting with methodologist as needed.

Summer: EDL 774 — Data Analysis

- Conduct a rigorous analysis of the data, following the timeline developed with the chair.
- Meet with dissertation chair at least 4 times, consulting with methodologist as needed.

Fall: EDL 776 — Results, Discussion, and Conclusion

- Develop Chapters 4 and 5; revise Chapters 1-3 as needed.
- Meet with dissertation chair at least 4 times, consulting with methodologist as needed.

Spring: EDL 777 — Dissertation

- Finalize dissertation according to the timeline/direction of the chair.
- Hold dissertation defense.
- Revise dissertation per committee recommendations as directed by the chair.
- Submit chair-approved manuscript to APU External Reader.

Summer:

- Continue enrollment in EDL 777 until the above steps are completed.
- Submit APU External Reader-approved manuscript to Graduate Student Publications.
- Publish dissertation in Proquest.

Year
3

Steps to Graduation: Dissertation and Beyond



Note: The timeline provided reflects a candidate's typical third year, but may change depending on the candidate's progress.

Preparation for Dissertation Defense Meeting

1

- Once approved by chair, work with committee members to schedule defense date (90-minute time slot required) and email program coordinator and chair with finalized date and time.
- Send chair-approved dissertation draft to all committee members for review AT LEAST 2 weeks prior to defense.
- Create slideshow presentation of dissertation study and send to chair AT LEAST 1 week before defense meeting. Make adjustments as directed by chair.

Dissertation Defense Meeting (Spring or Summer)

2

- Fill in Dissertation Defense Approval Form (via HelloSign) prior to defense.
- Arrive at defense meeting 30 minutes early to set up (must bring laptop to defense).
- Present dissertation study.
- Field questions by committee members and make note of suggestions for revision. Confer with chair at the end of the defense to plan revisions.
- After successful defense, follow instructions in post-defense email to (a) close IRB and (b) file an "Intent to Graduate" form with the Graduate Registrar for Fall of Year 3.

➔ Note: At the close of a successful defense, committee members refer to students as "Dr." as a courtesy to celebrate the occasion; however, the title is not officially conferred and should not be used until ALL requirements are completed.

Dissertation Revision (Spring or Summer)

3

- Make revisions to dissertation, following timeline developed with chair.
- Send revised manuscript to chair; make additional corrections as directed until chair approves final manuscript. Allow 1-2 weeks for chair review per revision submission.
- Send chair-approved manuscript to APU External Reader (list provided in post-defense email).

➔ Note: EDL 777 must be repeated until the dissertation is approved by the chair to be forwarded to the APU External Reader. See Degree Completion Fact Sheet (provided in the Spring semester of the third year) for exact dates by which re-enrollment in EDL 777 must occur.

APU External Reader Review & Edit of Dissertation (Spring or Summer)

4

- Contact APU External Reader from approved list received via email after the defense meeting.
- Respond to any questions and/or provide needed information in a timely manner.
- Pay APU External Reader for services rendered. The APU External Reader will then forward the manuscript to Graduate Student Publications.

Publication and Presentation of the Dissertation (Spring or Summer and September)

5

- Fix any remaining errors noted by the Director of Graduate Student Publications.
- Once final approval is received from the Director of Graduate Student Publications, follow instructions provided to publish the manuscript on ProQuest. Copyright and bound copies can be purchased if desired.
- Prepare slideshow for 7-minute public presentation of the dissertation. Send to chair for approval in early September (see Degree Completion Fact Sheet for exact deadlines).
- Present the dissertation publicly at the Presentation and Hooding event in September.
- Once the above steps are complete, the degree will post on the 15th of the current month or the 1st of the following month, whichever comes first. At that time, students can use the title of Dr. in all communications and sign their name with Ed.D. at the end.

APPENDIX B: DISSERTATION FORMS

1. Content Expert Request Form
2. Dissertation Proposal Approval Form
3. Oral Defense Approval Form

Content Expert Request Form

Section I Student Information

I request approval of the following content expert to guide my dissertation research.

Student Name: _____ ID Number: _____

Signature

Date

Section II Dissertation Information

Title/Topic:

Methodology: Qualitative Quantitative Undecided

Section III Committee Information

Content Expert Name:

Professional Role/Content Expertise:

APU Faculty Department: _____

Resume Attached (Required if not APU Faculty)

Is there any prior or current professional relationship with the student? Yes No

If yes, please explain:

Section IV Approval

Chair (Print)

Methodologist

(Signature)

Date

Ed.D. Faculty Member (Print)

Check One: Methodologist Second Reader

(Signature)

Date

If any changes are made to the committee a new form must be submitted.

This form is to be filled with the Ed.D. Program Office prior to the completion of EDL 772.

Department Chair, Educational Leadership (Signature)

Date



Dissertation Proposal Approval

Section I Student Information

Student Name: _____ ID Number: _____

Signature

Date

Section II Dissertation Information

Dissertation Title: _____

Section III Committee Approval

- 1) The literature review is satisfactory as a basis for the dissertation. Yes No
 - 2) The student's knowledge of the research design, analysis, and (if applicable) statistical techniques to be used in the dissertation is adequate and meets department standards. Yes No
 - 3) The dissertation proposal is approved. Yes, as submitted Yes, as revised No
- Comments: _____

Instrument is approved: Yes No

Chair (Print)
 Methodologist

(Signature)

Date

Ed.D. Faculty Member (Print)
Check One: Methodologist Second Reader

(Signature)

Date

Content Expert (Print)

(Signature)

Date

This form is to be filed with the Ed.D. Program office.

Department Chair, Educational Leadership (Signature)

Date



Oral Defense of Dissertation

Section I Student Information

Student Name: _____ APU ID Number: _____

Note: Please print name as it is to appear on the signature page of the dissertation.

Signature

Date

Section II Dissertation Information

Dissertation Title:

Section III Committee Approval

- The above student has successfully passed the oral defense of his/her dissertation.
- The above student has not passed his/her dissertation oral defense.
- Final approval of this dissertation is dependent upon the completion of changes both from the committee and the formatting editor.

Chair (Print)

Methodologist

(Signature)

Date

Ed.D. Faculty Member (Print)

Check One: Methodologist Second Reader

(Signature)

Date

Content Expert (Print)

Please print name as it is to appear on the signature page of student's dissertation.

(Signature)

Date

After approval and prior to commencement, a public presentation is also required.

This form is to be filed with the Ed.D. Program office.

Department Chair, Educational Leadership (Signature)

Date