

USF College of Public Health
DrPH Program
Doctoral Project Guidelines- Report Chapters and Presentations

Instructions

The Doctoral Project serves as the culminating comprehensive milestone for each DrPH student. This guideline document is divided into two sections: Part I on Chapters 1-3 and Appendix A or Doctoral Project Plan and the qualifying exam; and Part II on Chapters 4 and 5 and the final defense presentation.

This Doctoral Project is comprised of five chapters. An outline for each chapter is provided in this guidance document. At the beginning of each chapter there should be a one-paragraph chapter summary. This summary should provide the reader with highlights or a roadmap of what will be covered in the chapter. The guidance for the number of pages should be discussed with the Major Professor/Doctoral Committee/DrPH faculty.

NOTE 1: This guidance document is to be considered a best practice guidance for all cohorts prior to Fall 2020. For cohorts prior to Fall 2020 adherence is not mandatory but is highly recommended.

Doctoral Project Plan and Qualifying Exam

Near the completion of your required coursework (with the exception of your 6 credit hours of doctoral project coursework) you will be eligible for the first milestone, your oral qualifying exam. This is your defense of the Doctoral Project Plan. To qualify for your oral qualifying exam the student will prepare the first three chapters that include Chapter 1. Introduction; Chapter 2. Literature Review; Chapter 3. Methodology; and Appendix A. Project Implementation Considerations.

The student should start formulating ideas for this project upon entry into the program recognizing it as a multi-semester effort that will serve as the most comprehensive demonstration of your mastery of the DrPH competencies. It will integrate selected theories, frameworks, and a synthesis of the evidence base to support the project in your chosen field of public health practice. Each DrPH project must go through USF's Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval or exemption prior to data collection.

The qualifying exam is an oral exam summarizing chapters 1-3 and Appendix A of the Doctoral Project Plan. The student gives a 45-minute presentation followed by a series of questions from the committee based on the project and chosen DrPH competencies.

Administrative Requirements:

Before a student can schedule their oral qualifying exam two forms must be processed through Archivum.

- 1) Doctoral Committee Form identifying the student's USF and external committee members. For external committee members a copy of their CV must be submitted for credentialing through the Office of Graduate Studies. This must also be accompanied by a paragraph outlining the contribution of the external member to the doctoral project.
- 2) Qualifying Exam Application.

Qualifying exams cannot be conducted without these documents being processed and it is the

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DrPH student's responsibility to work with their major professor(s) and the doctoral programs office to ensure they are completed.

Doctoral Project Plan Formatting:

Students should use the APA style guide for references and citations, 1" margins, Times New Roman or Calibri fonts at 12 pt. body text, and all figures or tables should be labeled and numbered consecutively (e.g., Table 1.1, 1.2; Figure 2.1, 2.2, etc.).

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Part I: Chapters 1-3 and Appendix A

Cover Page

State the title of the doctoral project, the candidate's name, proposed or targeted completion date, and names of the doctoral committee members.

Abstract

Write an abstract for Chapters 1-3 and Appendix A. This will be revised when the project is completed prior to final defense of the completed doctoral project.

Table of Contents

Provide a numbered table of contents covering the chapter sections of the Doctoral Project Plan. Include a separate table of contents for List of Figures and List of Tables.

Chapter 1. Introduction and Statement of the Problem

The Introduction should describe the nature and purpose of the study, and explain the significance of and justification for conducting the study. This chapter should also present the specific hypotheses or research questions and specific aims to be addressed along with any known limitations of the study. Terms likely to be used throughout the proposal should be defined in this chapter. Chapter 1 should be a minimum of 10 pages and a maximum of 25.

Chapter Outline:

1. Chapter Summary (one paragraph)
2. Global problem statement
 - a. Summary description of the public health problem to be addressed in the study.
 - i. Include statement of purpose for the study
3. Background
 - a. Historical background of the issue being addressed.
4. Knowledge Gap
 - a. Summary of what will be covered in the literature review
 - b. Include theories/frameworks to be discussed
5. Extending the Evidence Base
 - a. Identify the gaps in the evidence base and discuss what your study will do to address this gap.
 - b. Known limitations for this study
6. Aims of the Study
 - a. 2-3 specific aims
 - b. Deliverables
 - i. Short description of each deliverable. This will be expanded upon in Chapter 3.
7. Strategic Questions
 - a. Specific research questions and or hypotheses to be addressed
 - b. Conclusions. Two paragraphs (or more) addressing why the aims are important

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and how your deliverables help address them.

8. Conceptual Framework¹
 - a. Design and include a conceptual framework for your study. Include both an illustration and narrative explanation of the: a) elements of the framework, b) flow or connectivity of the elements, and c) connection of the elements to your strategic question and problem being addressed. See example doctoral projects in Canvas DrPH Program page for sample models.

Chapter 2. Review of the Literature

Literature reviews should be thorough and systematic. Chapter 2 presents a critical analysis of prior scholarship related to the central questions of the doctoral project. It should explore what has or has not worked in the field of practice with regard to your selected guiding theory and the program, tool, intervention, or central topic of your project. Literature review chapters should be a **minimum of 35-50 pages**. Although the degree of completion and length of the literature review is a matter of deliberation with the committee.

- The literature review chapter will be divided into two major sections
 - *First*, the technical / practice issue that is the focus of the doctoral project. The student should critically and exhaustively review original research considering the multiple dimensions of their central topic.
 - *Second*, the theory/framework section. Discuss candidate theories/frameworks considered for application in your project and in the end discuss which were chosen and why. There are usually three or more theories/frameworks discussed. When these theories/frameworks are discussed, you should describe the theory/framework, give examples of how the theory has been applied in your field and the strengths and weaknesses of that application.
- This review should
 - Demonstrate a thorough understanding of the subject of the doctoral project, through review and analysis of previous works;
 - Critically synthesize ***original*** research in the field. **Note:** Summarizing a review article is allowable for you introduction paragraph but is not acceptable as part of your critical synthesis of the literature; this needs to be a true synthesis (see notes from Intro to Doctoral Training and Evidence Informed 1).
 - Identify the community of scholars to which the doctoral project is meant to contribute;

¹ Osanloo, A., & Grant, C. (2016). Understanding, selecting, and integrating a theoretical framework in dissertation research: Creating the blueprint for your “house”. *Administrative issues journal: connecting education, practice, and research*, 4(2), 7.

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- Identify areas of consensus, dispute, and gaps in the scholarship of the field and evaluates the nature and quality of support for various contentions. These are points you should address in your critical analysis section at the end of the chapter;
- Draw new insights or new questions from the literature to offer a *theoretical framework* to illustrate the application of the selected theory(s) in the context of which the doctoral project should be understood;
- Examines and weighs previous and potential methods for investigating the hypotheses or research questions to be addressed in the doctoral project;
- Prepares the reader to appreciate how the doctoral project will contribute significant new understanding to this framework; and
- While not required, a table listing the original studies reviewed provides a framework for summarizing the existing evidence.

Chapter Outline:

- a. Chapter Summary
- b. Overview of Literature to be Reviewed
 - a. Literature review methodology applied
 - i. Detail key search engines used, search criteria, key words, time periods (if applicable)
- c. Technical / Practice Issues Literature Section
 - a. Overview of literature related to the primary topic of your study (e.g., program, intervention, tools, organization, population, etc.)
 - b. PRISMA diagram and explanation of the selection criteria and results
 - c. Table summarizing major categories of technical / practice issue literature and the number of articles per category (strongly recommended)
 - d. Critical synthesis of the literature.
- d. Theory Literature Section (if applicable)

Note: The number of theories to be reviewed depends on the topic and what necessary to evaluate the theory in the field of study. Three is ideal, but realizing this may not apply to all fields.

 - a. This is a comprehensive overview of all theories/frameworks relevant to the topic of your study
 - b. PRISMA diagram and explanation of the selection criteria and results (strongly recommended)
 - c. Table summarizing major categories of theory/framework literature and the number of articles per category (strongly recommended)
 - d. Theory A
 - i. What is it?

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- ii. How has it been applied?
 - iii. What are the strengths and weaknesses?
- e. Theory B
 - i. What is it?
 - ii. How has it been applied?
 - iii. What are the strengths and weaknesses?
- f. Theory C
 - i. What is it?
 - ii. How has it been applied?
 - iii. What are the strengths and weaknesses?
- e. Theory Selection and Theoretical Framework
 - a. Address why you chose the theory (or theories as you may choose more than one) you will apply to your project and why it is appropriate to help address the research question/hyptheses and aims.
 - b. Provide a narrative justification supported by evidence from the literature.
 - c. Theoretical Framework²
 - i. Design and include a theoretical framework for your study. Include both an illustration and narrative explanation of the a) elements of the framework (e.g., this will differ from your conceptual framework as it will be focused on elements of the theory(s) that you have chosen), b) flow or connectivity of the elements, and c) connection of the elements to your strategic question and problem being addressed. See example doctoral projects in Canvas DrPH Program page for sample models.
- f. Critical Analysis Section
 - a. Address the intersection of the chosen theory/framework and the technical / practice issue covered in the first section of this chapter.
 - b. Address successes, strengths, and challenges that exist in the field of practice related to your primary topic and the chosen theory/framework.

Chapter 3. Methods

The methods chapter should describe in detail the quantitative, qualitative or mixed methods used in the doctoral project. This chapter should be a minimum of 15-20 pages. A written description of the methods, processes, or approach to implementation and evaluation must be included for all deliverables in this chapter. The methods should include a level of detail that provides the reader with the mechanism to repeat your work.

This chapter is divided into sections that describe participants or subjects, including a description of the population from which they are drawn, data collection processes or data sources, testing and measurement procedures. There must be a section on how data will be analyzed or how a project or program will be evaluated. The methods section must include

² Osanloo, A., & Grant, C. (2016). Understanding, selecting, and integrating a theoretical framework in dissertation research: Creating the blueprint for your “house”. *Administrative issues journal: connecting education, practice, and research*, 4(2), 7.

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detail on the analytical methods used whether qualitative or quantitative. This section should mimic a methods section in a grant or original research article and include appropriate references.

Depending on the project, there may be one global methods section as opposed to methods for each deliverable. Topics to be covered include:

- *Logic Model for the DrPH Project:* The logic model for the DrPH project provides a strategic overview illustrating a framework of the proposed study identifying at a high level the inputs, activities, outputs, final outcomes, and impacts specific to the project.
- *Project Objectives and Measures:* Describe the two or three objectives for your study and the specific measures that data will be collected for to analyze and evaluate them in the data analysis or evaluation plan.
- *Deliverables:* Describe the three distinct deliverables for your project. Identify what the measurable goals are for each deliverable. The following statements must pertain to all of these deliverables. If there are known or anticipated ways these deliverables will inform one another you should discuss them in this section.
- *Subjects and Setting:* The characteristics of participants of the project, how they were selected, and the setting of the project should be presented in detail.
- *Instrumentation / Surveys / Measurement Tools:* Any tools or instruments that might be important for readers to understand (such as, assessment instruments, surveys, interview formats, observation protocols, and data collection devices) should be described in detail with references provided. If subjects interacted with special equipment or software, or other materials, a detailed description is essential.
- *Data Collection Procedures:* The readers should be given a thorough description of all the steps involved in data collection. If data is not collected, a clear description of the data sources needs to be included.
- *Data Analysis or Evaluation Plan:* Regardless of the data collection method used, an analytic strategy must be applied. Describe the analytic strategies employed and a rationale for their use. To the degree that readers may be unfamiliar with the strategy, provide a detailed explanation. Methods of “data cleaning”, data refinement, categorization schemes and how they were developed, data transformations, statistical tests.
- *Operationalizing the Theoretical Framework:* Provide a modified version of the theoretical framework from Chapter 2 that illustrates actions to be taken in the study to put theory into practice. See example doctoral projects in Canvas DrPH Program page for sample models.
- *IRB Approval:* If your project includes any data from human subjects, you are required to submit to the USF IRB. Many projects may fit the exempt category, but that is for the IRB to decide. The letter from the USF IRB is required for submission of the final doctoral project as an appendix.

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- *Gantt Chart*: Include a Gantt chart illustrating a proposed schedule of key tasks and linkages between those tasks for the study. A narrative description should accompany this section addressing task/deliverable linkage complexity challenges (e.g., where one task/deliverable may inform another) and industry or employer related points of importance (e.g., expectations for deliverables or task completion that may be tied to actual requirements in the work setting).
- *Project Strengths and Limitations*: Address the strengths and limitations of the study and each deliverable. This section will be updated after the study is executed and the deliverables are completed.

Chapter Outline:

- a. Chapter Summary
- b. Overall Project Rationale
- b. Logic Model for the DrPH Project
 - a. This should have the elements specific to your project under the framework of describing your inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes and impact.
- c. Objectives and Measures
- d. Deliverables
 - c. Deliverable 1
 - d. Deliverable 2
 - e. Deliverable 3
- d. Subjects and Setting
 - a. Demographic description of the participants
- e. Target Audience
 - a. Describe who the study is intended to benefit
- f. Instrumentation/Surveys/Measurement Tools
 - a. Descriptions of any interview guides, assessment tools, etc.
- g. Data Collection Procedures
 - a. Description of mixed, quantitative or qualitative methods
- h. Data Analysis/Evaluation Plan
 - a. Analytic strategies
 - b. Statistical tests (for quantitative studies)
 - c. Thematic analysis (for qualitative studies)
- i. Plans for IRB approval or status of the approval
- j. Gantt Chart
- k. Project Strengths and Weaknesses

Appendix A. Project Implementation Considerations

Appendix A will be the first appendix for the doctoral project that discusses feasibility, innovation, public health impact, and DrPH competencies for your doctoral project. It should be a minimum of 5 pages. The following sections should be included:

- *Project Feasibility*: Address any feasibility concerns (e.g., risks) that may need to be addressed to accomplish the project.

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- *Project Innovation:* How is the project innovative? How will it address a gap in knowledge or information needed in the field of public health practice? Address these questions to describe the unique or unmet need that the project, its deliverables and outcomes are intended to provide.
- *Public Health Impact:* Discuss the strategic impact of your project to the field of public health. Consider it from a micro to macro level including any complexities or challenges for further implementation in the field or additional research questions to be answered based on the outcomes of your deliverables.
- *DrPH Competencies:* Address at least five DrPH competencies that will be met through your work in the development and completion of each of your three deliverables.

Appendix A Outline:

- a. Project Feasibility
- b. Project Innovation
- c. Public Health Impact
- d. DrPH competencies

Qualifying exam: Presentation

- a. Objectives, Goals and Aims of the Study (*2-3 slides*) – This initial section should present concisely the objectives, goals and aims of the study as originally presented in the student’s oral exam.
- b. Conceptual Framework (*1 slide*)
- c. Literature Review- Summary Landscape (*8-10 slides*) – In this section the student is providing a high level summary for the public audience of their literature review.
 - i. Project significance in filling the literature gap- describe succinctly what was accomplished in the project that will help address the gap in the literature on the project’s central topic.
 - ii. Theoretical framework (*1 slide*)
 - iii. Summary of literature synthesis- briefly summarize the synthesis of the literature reviewed (practice related literature to theory related literature).
- d. Methods (can be global or for each deliverable) (*6-10 slides*)
 - i. Operationalizing the theoretical framework (*1 slide*)
 - ii. Discussion of your methods (data collection and analysis plan) (*5-9 slides*)
- e. Implementation Plan (*2-3 slides*)
- f. Competencies (*1-2 slides*)

Part II: Final Chapters and Defense Presentation

Final Defense Documents: Chapters 4 and 5

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Concluding Chapters to the DrPH Project Report- To complete the DrPH project, each student will develop Chapters 4 and 5 to add to Chapters 1-3 that comprised their completed DrPH Project Plan. All appendices should be included in this final Doctoral Project Report. Since the methods and implementation plan were executed, verb tense needs to be changed in Chapter 3 and finalize the study abstract.

Chapter 4. Results

Chapter 4 (8-14 pages + appendices) is a comprehensive summary of the results of the student's three evidence-based deliverables. Included with this chapter must be a copy of the final documentation of the three final deliverables unless agreed upon with the student's doctoral committee to not include a deliverable. If deliverable documentation is a separate manuscript, or PowerPoint presentation, or set of tables, these should be placed in separate appendices at the end of the report after the Bibliography section. Additionally, a copy of any instruments used (i.e. interview guides, surveys, focus group guides) should be placed in separate appendices. Included in this chapter should be a section on how the student applied a chosen framework or theory applied as an evaluation tool in the analysis of data collected and presentation of results.

Chapter Outline:

1. Introduction- Provide a 1-2 page summary introducing the chapter. This section serves as an executive summary of what was done in executing your deliverables. Also view it as an analytical overview of your three deliverables.
2. Evidence-based Deliverables Completed: presentation of deliverables- Discuss the qualitative and or quantitative results of each deliverable. What were the most important takeaways for each deliverable. Place copies of the actual deliverable in separate appendices of the final DrPH project report.
 - g. Deliverable 1 (2-4 page summary)
 - h. Deliverable 2 (2-4 page summary)
 - i. Deliverable 3 (2-4 page summary)

Chapter 5. Discussion

Chapter 5 (*minimum 10 pages – 25 pages*) is the student's concluding strategic technical discussion of the results of their study. This chapter is the students final opportunity to make their first public statements about the importance of their project work, challenges encountered, connections between theory and their field of practice, issues with implementation, dissemination, or sustainability of findings, and suggestions for future research.

Chapter Outline:

- a. Chapter Summary
- b. Executive Summary of Findings (2 pages)- summarize the most important points from each stage of your work in the project from its inception to completion.
- c. Intersection of Practice and Theory (4-8 pages)
 1. Takeaways from theory application in the project
 - i. Challenge encountered- Discuss any significant challenges that created setbacks in terms of schedule, or difficulty in applying your chosen theory(s) to the project.

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- ii. Dissemination or Implementation.³ Discuss any key issues addressed or still outstanding related to disseminating or implementing your work in practice..
- iii. Insights from stakeholders related to the implementation of your study- What were the most important points to note in regards to the “implementation climate”⁴ and the “relative priority”⁵ of your study? Describe insights on these two issues to convey to the external audience who will read your report in the future.
- iv. Crosswalk with Research Aims
 - 1. Discuss how your conclusions tie back to your original aims of your study.
- v. Lessons learned in applying theory to practice
 - 1. What worked well- Discuss what you felt worked best (e.g., focus groups, survey administration and participation, interview techniques, particular analysis method, etc.) and its “adaptability”⁶ to other settings.
 - 2. What to recommend applying or changing in future related studies- Address any recommendations you have for others in applying theory to practice from this study.
- d. Conclusions: Impact and Innovation Insights (4-8 pages)
 - 1. The Outcome Side of Public Health Impacts and Innovations (3-5 pages)
 - vi. Comparison of anticipated results to what actually was produced (1-2 page)- Describe your actual results of the study compared to what you anticipated.
 - vii. Benefits derived for you (1 page combined for b, c and d)- As you concluded your work on the project what were the most significant benefits to you from the standpoint of infusing theory into your field of practice?
 - viii. Benefits derived for stakeholders (1 page combined for b, c and d)- What were the most significant benefits in the study to your key stakeholders (e.g., target audience, population, or cohort group intended to benefit from the study’s results)

³ Estabrooks, P. A., Brownson, R. C., & Pronk, N. P. (2018). Dissemination and implementation science for public health professionals: an overview and call to action. *Preventing chronic disease, 15*;

Nilsen, P. (2015). Making sense of implementation theories, models and frameworks. *Implementation science, 10*(1), 53.

⁴ CFIR Guidelines. Implementation Climate. Accessed online at http://cfirguide.org/wiki/index.php?title=Implementation_Climate

⁵ CFIR Guidelines. Relative Priority. Accessed online at http://cfirguide.org/wiki/index.php?title=Relative_Priority

⁶ CFIR Guidelines. Adaptability. Accessed online at <http://cfirguide.org/wiki/index.php?title=Adaptability>

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- ix. Any negative impacts encountered (1 page combined for b, c and d)- Were there any negative unanticipated impacts or issues that emerged in or during the study (non-administrative) that would be helpful to others who may choose to replicate your study in the future. Describe them here in this section.
- x. Unforeseen benefits, process improvements, or novel intervention ideas that emerged during the project's execution (1-2 page)- Discuss any emergent unforeseen benefits that you experienced from the project. This may also be process improvements that were unanticipated. Include application of your chosen theory(s) to apply in the project. (4-6 pages)
- e. Final Recommendations (3 pages)
 - j. Suggestions for future related research- Discuss your suggestions for others to apply as lessons learned in future related research.
 - k. Dissemination Implications- Discuss issues pertinent at local to national levels for your project related to how you have, would, or will disseminate your findings.

Final Defense Documents: Presentation

To complete the DrPH program each DrPH student will prepare a final culminating presentation. The presentation will be made after all final analysis of results and deliverables are completed. This final defense presentation will be open to the public.

1. **Final Culminating Presentation** – The final culminating presentation is one that is “open to the public” for viewing.
 - a. Objectives, Goals and Aims of the Study (2-3 slides) – This initial section should present concisely the objectives, goals and aims of the study as originally presented in the student's oral exam.
 - i. Recap of Chapters 1-3 and Appendix A (1-2 slides)
 - b. Literature Review- Summary Landscape (2-3 slides) – In this section the student is providing a high level summary for the public audience of their literature review.
 - i. Project significance in filling the literature gap- describe succinctly what was accomplished in the project that will help address the gap in the literature on the project's central topic.
 - ii. Summary of literature synthesis- briefly summarize the synthesis of the literature reviewed (practice related literature to theory related literature).
 - c. Summary of Evidence-based Deliverables⁷ (2-3 slides) – This section is a summary overview of the student's three deliverables.

⁷ Deliverables will already be reviewed and approved by the student's doctoral committee prior to this presentation. Findings for each of the deliverables will be included in the “Chapter 5: Results”. Therefore, this presentation section is a short synopsis for the “public” audience.

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- i. Summary of Deliverables (1 slides) – A set of bullets or a table summarizing what the deliverables were.
- ii. Population Studied and Method Used (2 slides)- Describe the population involved in the study and the methods used in data collection and for analysis and evaluation of data.
 1. Data collection procedures
 2. Data analysis & evaluation executed
 - a. Quantitative
 - b. Qualitative
- iii. Results of the Three Planned Deliverables (5-7 slides)
 1. What was completed?
 2. What were the results?
- d. Competencies (4-5 slides max)- A strategic overview of what DrPH competencies selected for the doctoral project and how the doctoral project successfully achieved these competences.
 - i. What competencies were selected? (*1 slide*)- List the competencies chosen for your project.
 - ii. Synthesis of how the project successfully achieved the competencies (*3-4 slides max*)- Describe how the work in the project provided experience or new knowledge that enhanced your achievement of chosen competencies.
- e. Implications for Contemporary Public Health Practice & Policy Advancement
 - i. Implications from your study for implementation, dissemination, and sustainability (*3-5 slides*)- Discuss implementation issues related to what emerged during the execution phase of the doctoral project. What was discovered in the quest of answering your research question or aims that
 - a) adds to the literature, b) infuses new knowledge to help a specific population, c) changes current industry practice. Indicate any policy implications related to these issues that resulted from the project.