

Notes on Dissertations

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Dissertations
Spring Semester 2006

Definitions

A **dissertation** is an original research document submitted to the graduate school of the university for partial fulfillment of the requirements for the doctoral degree.

A **thesis** is a work produced for the master's degree.

Literature Reviews

Doctoral students start the work towards their dissertation by performing a literature review; that is, searching for and reading all of the work that has already been done on their topic. Since this review needs to be very thorough, it is recommended to consult with a reference librarian. Students can **make appointments with a librarian** in order to get the individual attention they need at this crucial point in their research program.

Searching for Dissertations and Theses

✓ **Current research @ University of Kansas : a digital library of dissertations and theses** Search citations and abstracts of dissertations and theses submitted by this institution and published in UMI's Dissertation Abstracts database. **View** 24 page previews of dissertations published after 1996 and **download** the full text of dissertations and theses published after 1996 (*if you are an authorized user from this institution then the downloaded copies are free*).

✓ **ProQuest Dissertations and Theses (PQDT):** PQDT provides online access to over 2 million dissertations and master's theses, many of which are available in full text for immediate download. Citations are available for dissertations dating from 1861 and **full text online from 1997** for over 1,000 schools submitting.

✓ **Print Copies of KU Dissertations:** Two **print (book) copies** of each title are held by KU Libraries – one copy in Archives that CANNOT be checked out and one in Anschutz Library that CAN be checked out. Again, ask a reference librarian for help.

✓ **KU Online Catalog to locate pre-1996 KU Dissertations:** Use author or title to locate known dissertations. Find a sampling of KU dissertations by using the following search method on the Online Catalog: select Advanced Search and type **dissertation** on the first line and **university of kansas** on the next line and press Search. This will find many dissertations published within KU. Type a specific keyword on the third line (ie: **education**) to further limit your search.

✓ **WorldCat:** This database is the OCLC Online Union Catalog, containing millions of records describing items owned by the KU Libraries and libraries around the world. Use keywords for topic search with "dissertation" and "university of whatever" in the notes field. Also, restrict by location, language and date to limit number of hits.

✓ **Specialized Subject Indexes:** Databases such as Social Work Abstracts and PsycInfo include dissertations and theses.

A dissertation for Educational Leadership *may* contain:

- Title Page
- Abstract
- Dedication Page
- Acknowledgments
- Table of Contents
- Chapter One . (Introduction to the Study)
- Chapter Two . (Review of the Literature)
- Chapter Three . (Methodology)
- Chapter Four . (Research Findings--Product)
- Chapter Five . (Summary, Conclusions)
- Appendices
- References

Hints:

- Follow the proposal (your blueprint) that was approved by your committee
- Study other dissertations to determine style, flow of writing, etc.
- Remember: Different types of dissertations are organized in different ways
- Cite accurately & be consistent
- Manuscript style: check with your department

THE FLOW:

Beginning writers should see the dissertation as a series of units or chunks that are welded together rather than a novel, which flows seamlessly.

✓ **ABSTRACT**

Have you followed the guidelines provided by the Graduate School?

Would another researcher: understand what you did? .. understand how you did it? .. know your conclusions?

✓ **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

Are the entire contents of the dissertation identified here?

✓ **CHAPTER ONE--INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY**

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

- Have you stated a clear question with a minimum of words?
- Does the study have a significant problem to focus on?
- Is this question answered/addressed in conclusion?

PURPOSE OF STUDY

- What was the purpose of the study?
- Was the purpose of the study dealt with or revisited in the conclusion?

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What are the key questions to be answered in this research?
- Are the answers to these questions found/addressed in the conclusion?

OBJECTIVES

- What are the key outcomes of the study?
- Were the objectives addressed in the conclusion?
- How is the study organized around the study's objectives?

SIGNIFICANCE OF YOUR STUDY

- What are the parameters of the dissertation?

HOW ARE THE LIMITATIONS ADDRESSED IN THE CONCLUSION?

- What difference will the study make?
- How is the significance addressed in the conclusion?

SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

- What are the parameters of the dissertation?
- How are the limitations addressed in the conclusion?

DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

- Are all definitions of key words addressed?
- Have some words been redefined since the writing of the proposal?

ORGANIZATION OF STUDY

- How is this dissertation organized?

SUMMARY

- What are the main points contained in this chapter?

✓ **CHAPTER TWO – REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

INTRODUCTION

- How is the review of the literature organized?
- How are the concepts related to each other?

VARIOUS CONCEPT HEADINGS (DEPENDING ON THE TOPIC)

- What have previous authors written about and around the topic?
- What were the important discoveries?

- Are many authors saying the same thing?
- Does the review of the literature support your dissertation's profile?

SUMMARY

- The review of literature disclosed what?

✓ **CHAPTER THREE – METHODOLOGY**

INTRODUCTION

- How is this chapter organized?

METHODOLOGY

- What was the sequence of procedures?
- What is the reliability and validity of the methodology?

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

- What was the purpose of the needs assessment?
- What evidence did you gather with the needs assessment?

PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

- What activities did you engage in to develop the product?

PRELIMINARY FIELD TEST

- What information did you find in the preliminary field test?
- Who were the audiences that you involved in the field test?
- What criteria did you use to select the participants?

PRODUCT REVISION

- What revisions occurred in the product?
- Who were the audiences?
- What criteria did you use to select the participants?

MAIN FIELD TEST

- What revisions occurred in the product?
- Who was the audience that participated in the field test?
- What criteria did you use to select the participants?

PRODUCT REVISION

- Specifically, how was the product revised?

SUMMARY

- What were the main points that were covered in this chapter?

✓ **CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH FINDINGS, THE VALIDATED PRODUCT**

PRODUCT

- The product should appear in its entirety.

HINTS

- The pagination will need to be consistent with the rest of the dissertation; however, the pagination will be different when the product is viewed by itself. Remember, THIS IS THE MOST IMPORTANT SECTION OF YOUR DISSERTATION.

✓ **CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY**

INTRODUCTION & SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES

- Why and how did you conduct this study (briefly)?

CONCLUSIONS

- What are the conclusions derived from the study?
- Do your conclusions relate to your original research questions?

IMPLICATIONS

- What difference will this study make and to whom? Ask yourself this question: "so what?"

DISSEMINATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

- What needs to be done to disseminate this information?
- What additional R&D activities will need to be done (beyond what you have already done)?

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

- What questions were generated as A RESULT of this study?
- What additional research could or should be done?

SUMMARY

- What did you say in this chapter?

Select Educational Databases from the Libraries Gateway to Information

<http://www.lib.ku.edu/>

[Education abstracts](#)

Indexes publications covering every age and sector of the educational community from preschool through college. Includes the journal literature, yearbooks, selected series, supplements and book review citations.

[ERIC](#)

Provides indexing and abstracts to the education literature. ERIC consists of two files: Resources in Education, covering the document literature, and Current Index to Journals in Education, covering the published journal literature. Many of the documents, identified by the ED number, are available full text.

[Kraus curriculum development library](#)

The Kraus Curriculum Development Library is a fully searchable database that brings together in one place: Curricula, frameworks, and standards from all across the English-speaking world; lessons and learning activities; educational objectives; educational content; instructional strategies; evaluative techniques.

[Learning Resources Center catalog](#)

Contains records for the children's and general collections in the Learning Resource Center.

[Linguistics & language behavior abstracts \(LLBA\)](#)

Indexes and abstracts articles in the study of language including phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics. Also the study of descriptive, historical, comparative, theoretical and geographical linguistics.

[Media review digest](#)

A comprehensive guide to reviewed and evaluated non-print media, including: educational and feature films; videocassettes; videodiscs; DVDs; educational and spoken-word records, tapes and compact discs; CD-ROMs and other optical media; slides; transparencies; kits; maps; anatomical models; and games. Since 1996, Media Review Digest also provides access to reviews and related resources accessible via the Web.

[Mental measurements yearbook](#)

Contains descriptive information and critical reviews of commercially-available standardized English-language educational, personality, aptitude, neuropsychological, achievement and intelligence tests. Contains the text of the Buros Institute's Yearbooks.

[PsycINFO](#)

Contains citations and summaries of journal articles, book chapters, books, and technical reports, as well as citations to dissertations, all in the field of psychology and psychological aspects of related disciplines, such as medicine, psychiatry, nursing, sociology, education, pharmacology, physiology, linguistics, anthropology, business, and law. The journal literature spans 1887 to the present. Current chapter and book coverage includes worldwide English-language material published from 1987-present. Produced by the American Psychological Association.

[Wilson OmniFile full text select](#)

Provides indexing, abstracting and full-text content to journal articles in a variety of disciplines.

A man may write at any time, if he will set himself doggedly to it.
-- Samuel Johnson

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