

Joint Doctoral Program in Interdisciplinary Research on Substance Use Dissertation committee & proposal planning document 2024



This form is for planning purposes only to plan out your dissertation committee members and proposal plans. It can serve to dialogue with your Primary Mentor(s) and map out ideas for your dissertation. It is important to note that dissertation research may not be initiated until your committee has been formally approved by UCSD and that you have presented your formal proposal to your committee (the Oral Qualifying Exam) and they have approved of your research. Additional details follow.

See UCSD web site for dissertation timeline overview <https://grad.ucsd.edu/academics/preparing-to-graduate/dissertation-thesis-submission.html>

Student Name:

Date form completed or revised:

I. Early preparation to engage in dissertation research discussion with your mentor

1st and 2nd year students are recommended to:

- Talk to your mentor - **they need to have an idea of what they want their topic to be - who has expertise in that area, do they plan to pursue NIH or other funding**
 - Narrow your research topic (see following guide on dissertation planning)
 - Help with identifying other professors with expertise in your area of interest
 - Help with identifying potential committee members
 - Help with developing an F31 or R36 (or other) proposal
 - What to do if your mentor has limited capacity to support you
- **Data**
 - Identify data sources - **You need to know whether you might want to collect your own data or use someone else's, you don't have to identify a source at the early stage of dissertation planning, but you need to know what direction they want to go and on what kind of topic.**
 - Can you use a publicly available dataset?
 - Does your mentor have data you can use?
 - Can your mentor introduce you to another professor with data you can use?
 - Or collect your own data
 - Can you join a project that is currently running?
 - Do you need funding? (incentives for participants?)
 - Do you have access to the people from whom you want to collect data?
 - Who could help you access them?
 - Pros/cons to think about when deciding what data to use
 -
- Committee - **committee discussions are only helpful if you KNOW YOUR RESEARCH TOPIC - so again, they need to have an idea of what they want to study for their dissertation. They should have a conversation with their mentor about what might be possible (ties int to topic 1 and 2 above)**
 - Who can be on your committee (see **II. Committee Composition and Formation** in next section)
 - Share list
 - Explain campus requirements
 - What to look for in committee members
 - JDP committee form
 - Classes -**likewise discussions on classes are only helpful if you KNOW YOUR RESEARCH TOPIC - so again, they need to have an idea of what they want to study for their dissertation. They should have a conversation with their mentor about what might be possible (ties int to topic 1 and 2 above)**

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- What methods do you need to learn?
- The role of independent study courses
- Developing your ideas through coursework

II. Committee Composition and Formation

Please read doctoral committee eligibility and committee composition requirements:

<https://grad.ucsd.edu/academics/progress-to-degree/committees.html>

On this web site, you can see the Doctoral Committee Membership Table <https://grad.ucsd.edu/academics/progress-to-degree/committees.html#Doctoral-Committee-Membership-T>

Committee Composition: (See eligible faculty here:

Minimum 5 members (six possible)

UCSD 2 faculty from Department of Medicine or from list of approved persons who can serve; in cases for faculty with specific expertise who are outside the School of Medicine, a petition for them to serve as a committee member may be made but Deanship approval is not guaranteed*.

SDSU 2 School of Social Work or from list of faculty who have been approved by the SDSU College of Graduate Studies to serve as 'internal member' (as if they were from the School of Social Work); Co-Chair or "outside member" (from outside School of Social Work).

One faculty 'outside' person not from either department.

Additional guidance:

As per UCSD Graduate Education, at least 2 members differing in academic specialty from student, regardless of whether members are from inside or outside the student's department.

*On a case-by-case basis, a student may request JDP Directorship support to seek an exception from the UCSD Graduate Division Dean in order to request inclusion of a committee member who is outside the Department of Medicine and/or who does not meet Professor Title as per UCSD guidelines (Ph.D. committee composition table: <https://grad.ucsd.edu/academics/progress-to-degree/committees.html#Doctoral-Committee-Membership-T>)

This may occur, for example if a student has been working with a faculty researcher with substance use research expertise from another department who may not fit the UCSD table criteria for who can serve as committee chair or member of a committee with specialized.

Deanship approval is NOT GUARANTEED, therefore students should inquire early if their mentor is suited to serve as Chair or committee member.

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	Proposed Committee Member	Institution	Title	Area of expertise congruent with student proposed area of study
1	(Chair)			
2	(Co-Chair) optional			
3				
4				
5				

DISSERTATION PROPOSAL (a.k.a. Prospectus) PLANNING

The space below is designed to help you consider key elements that you will need to define for your proposal and facilitate communication with your committee.

You should consult with your Committee Chair(s) and committee members as you develop your overarching research aim and proposed study aims (3-papers publishable quality).

Dissertation Proposal planning (Concept Paper and Timeline)

I. Statement of the Problem Rationale for why the research is needed. Support with literature review of critical studies, Clearly articulate the research gap or gaps that the student will address in their dissertation.	
II. Significance of the Research Provide support that indicates the need for the type of study that is being proposed. Indicate short and longer-term implications of the proposed research Include a brief review of the literature with relevant citations and/or outline of additional topics to be included in the review of the literature for the full proposal.	
III. Dissertation overarching research aim: (include brief background on topic, clearly articulate the research gap and how your proposed research will contribute to filling this gap in the science)	
Brief description of studies to be conducted by the student that will support the dissertation overarching research aim	How will completion of this study contribute to addressing the overarching aim & gap in literature?
1. Proposed Research study Research Aim 1 (Paper 1)	
2. Proposed Research study Research Aim 2 (Paper 2)	
3. Proposed Research study Research Aim 3 (Paper 3)	

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IV. Research questions & methods

Aims	Research questions for each aim Should be answerable within timeline	Methods (e.g. data sources, measures, planned primary outcomes (dependent variables) and independent variables, procedures, and analysis methods to be used in each study.)
1. Research Aim 1 (Paper 1)	1.1 1.2 1.3	
2. Research Aim 2 (Paper 2)		
3. Research Aim 3 (Paper 3)		

V. Potential limitations and possible considerations to address

SAMPLE Timeline

	04/ YR	05/ YR	6/ YR	07/ YR	8	9/	10/	11/	12/	1/	2/	3/	4/	5/	6/
Intro/Literature Review															
Initiate IRB application															
Finalize formation of doctoral committee															
Write dissertation proposal (NIH R01 Format)															
Submit IRB application															
Send dissertation proposal to committee members															
Proposal oral defense															
Incorporate Comt. feedback into proposal															
Initiate work on Aim 1 (i.e., paper 1) of proposal															
Collect data															
Analyze data															
Write dissertation/ three papers															
Communicate updates to Committee (ongoing)															
Send Draft to Chair															
Send dissertation draft to committee members															
Dissertation Defense (sign up for SW 899 SDSU class in final semester of defense)															

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Source:

Concept paper format is from The University of Vermont College of Nursing and Health Sciences: Doctoral Program of Study of Human Functioning and Rehabilitation Sciences

https://www.uvm.edu/sites/default/files/media/Dissertation_Concept_Paper_Protocol_and_Form.pdf