

Westcliff University Dissertation Proposal Alignment Foci

The Proposal Alignment Targets are designed to guide doctoral students in the proper development of their dissertation topic, literature review, problem statement, sample population/location, research question creation, hypothesis development, methodology, purpose statement, data collection, and data analysis procedures. The goal is to provide proper guidance on identifying and defining the need or problem area based on peer-reviewed literature to the doctoral student's passion, potential career purpose, and degree emphasis or concentration. This document includes a checklist to ensure proper development of a dissertation proposal and defense.

Dissertation Alignment Terms		Checklist on the Development	Feedback/Comments
1.	<p>Finding a Dissertation Topic</p> <p>A broad research topic area/title that includes a gap in literature or current business problem within the past 3-to-5-years presented in peer-reviewed scholarly research.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Topic comes out of the problem space supported by the literature, not the learner's opinion or personal agenda. Sources supporting the problem statement should be supported by peer-reviewed literature published within the past 5 years <input type="checkbox"/> Topic aligns to the student's program of study <input type="checkbox"/> Topic is researchable within the learners' doctoral program length, including dissertation courses as needed <input type="checkbox"/> Dissertation topic is focused and manageable	
2.	<p>Developing the Literature Review</p> <p>Sections of the Literature Review:</p> <p>(1) Background of the problem and the need for the study. Must be based on citations from the peer-reviewed literature</p> <p>(2) Theoretical foundations (theories, models, and concepts) and if appropriate the</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Background to the problem <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Over 70% of literature is from past 5 years <input type="checkbox"/> Provides historical solutions of problem being studied <input type="checkbox"/> Clearly defines a need for the research and list the stakeholders <input type="checkbox"/> Theoretical foundation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Theories, models, or concepts to include a conceptual framework that will guide the research and the data collection 	



	<p>conceptual framework to provide the foundation for study)</p> <p>(3) Review of literature topics with main points and benefits to conducting the research.</p> <p>(4) Summary</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Review of literature topics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> All literature is relevant to the topic<input type="checkbox"/> Literature demonstrates the learner's breadth of knowledge of the topic	
3.	<p>Creating a Problem Statement</p> <p>Problem statements describe the defined needs or problem space supported by at least one literature reference. Normally 3 years or less.</p> <p>**Anything older and you run the risk of not being a current problem.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Statement is appropriate for the design</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Student did not attempt to develop a new theoretical model<input type="checkbox"/> Student included a conceptual framework or theoretical model to help them quickly understand the main theory/ies they are interested in and to help them set the boundaries/scope of the research project <p><input type="checkbox"/> Researchable</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Includes variables to be analyzed</p>	
4.	<p>Designing Research Questions</p> <p>Provides research questions to collect data to address the problem statement.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate for the design</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Resulting data will address the problem statement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Qualitative Research: Minimum of 2 research questions<input type="checkbox"/> Quantitative Research: Minimum of 3 research questions and associated with the null and alternative hypotheses.	
4a.	<p>Designing Research Questions that Describe or Explore</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What are the characteristics of X?• How has X changed over time?• What are the main elements or factors in X?• How does X experience Y?	



		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How has X dealt with Y?	
4b.	Designing Research Questions to Evaluate	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What are the advantages and disadvantages of X?• How effective is X?• How can X be achieved?• What are the most effective strategies to improve X?• How can X be used in Y?	
4c.	Designing Research Questions to Explain or Test	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is the relationship between X and Y?• What is the role of X in Y?• What is the impact of X on Y?• How does X influence Y?• What are the causes of X?	
4d.	Example Research Problem Employees under 35 years old prefer remote full-time work instead of on-site full-time work, but there is little research on the factors that lead to the preference to work remote over traditional.	Example Research Questions What are the main factors that influence employees under the age 35 to prefer remote full-time work? What do workers under 35 years of age perceive as advantages and disadvantages of full-time work? How do age and education level have an effect on how people experience this type of work?	
5.	Selecting a Sample Population and Location Identify your sample population, suggested sample size, and location/region of the sample population.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Size is appropriate for design<input type="checkbox"/> Likely to be able to access it/get permission<input type="checkbox"/> Identified alternatives to their organization (associations, community orgs, research companies, snowball sampling, etc.)	

	**Note: Be clear and specific about the sample of study participants. Be specific about the inclusion criteria.	** Example: Managers with 5+ yrs of experience as a manager, with a Masters degree, between the ages of 30 and 50, etc. etc.	
6.	Writing Hypothesis/Variables Data sources are valid; variables are clearly defined and measurable (quantitative)	Quantitative Only: <input type="checkbox"/> Data sources are valid <input type="checkbox"/> Variables are clearly defined and measurable	
7.	Writing the Methodology and Design Describes the selected methodology and specific research design to address the problem statement and research questions.	<input type="checkbox"/> Methodology and design sections are appropriate for the problem statement <input type="checkbox"/> Student justifies the methodology or design using problem statement and citations <input type="checkbox"/> Methodology does not discuss design, instrument, data collection <input type="checkbox"/> Design does not discuss instrument, data collection, data analysis	
8.	Determining the Purpose Statement Provides one sentence statement of purpose including the problem statement, methodology, design, target population, and location.	<input type="checkbox"/> Purpose statement = Methodology + design + problem statement + sample + location	
9.	The Data Collection Process Describes primary instruments and sources of data to answer research questions.	<input type="checkbox"/> For quantitative research: <input type="checkbox"/> Used validated or previously used measurement scales or instrument or data source clearly identified for each variable <input type="checkbox"/> Demographic variables identified and appropriate to the study <input type="checkbox"/> Describes sample; various permissions needed; recruiting and select final sample;	



		<p>data collection steps; how data will be stored, security maintained, privacy maintained</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> For qualitative research:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Focused on data collection using open-ended questions and conversation<input type="checkbox"/> Qualitative answers “what a person thinks” and “why” they believe it to do such<input type="checkbox"/> Is based on disciplines such as psychology, sociology, and anthropology to provide in-depth questioning to understand a feeling or motivation. <p>(Types of qualitative research methods: Focus-group, case study, ethnographic, or observation)</p>	
<p>10.</p>	<p>Conducting a Data Analysis</p> <p>The data analysis describes the specific approach to be used to address each research question.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Quantitative analysis included: (1) testing assumptions; (2) descriptive statistics; (3) inferential statistics appropriate for design; (4) type of variables analyzed; (5) note: it is appropriate to accept or reject the null hypothesis<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Data analysis is in alignment with (1) research design, (2) independent and dependent variables, (3) each research question, and (4) each hypothesis.<input type="checkbox"/> Qualitative data analysis relied on notes, videos, audio recordings, images, and/or text documents.	