

**Applied Social and Community Psychology Program
Journal-Length Thesis and Dissertation Format Requirements**

The Graduate School and the Department of Psychology have specific guidelines for theses and dissertations, which can be found on their web sites. In addition, program areas within the NC State Department of Psychology may have additional requirements and guidelines. The requirements in this document pertain to the format of theses and dissertations for Applied Social and Community Psychology students, and were approved by the program faculty on 9/19/2014.¹

Journal-Length Format Requirement in Brief

All SoCo students entering the program in Fall 2014 or later are required to submit a journal-length document as the basis for their thesis or dissertation defense. The nature of the material submitted for a proposal meeting would be at the discretion of the individual student's committee.

For the dissertation only, there is a publication-based dissertation option, which is an alternative to the journal-length option described herein. For description of the publication-based dissertation option, see the document: *Publication-Based Dissertation Option for Applied Social and Community Psychology Graduate Students at NC State University (2/4/2016)*.

Rationale for this Requirement

This requirement accomplishes two important objectives. First, it gives students training and practice in the development of journal-length research documents. This is a skill that students are increasingly expected to display from the beginning of their professional careers. Second, the development of a journal-length document should increase the likelihood that students' work is submitted for review for publication. It is in the student's and the program's interest to see that quality research enters the field through publication. We also believe that this approach will increase the focus and quality of comments offered by committee members.

To Whom Does this Apply?

The following requirements regarding the format of the thesis and dissertation applies to all Applied Social and Community Psychology students who have entered the program in the Fall 2014 or later.

Students entering the program before Fall 2014 can negotiate with their committee about the appropriateness of this format for their theses and/or dissertations.

Proposal Requirements

The committee and the student will consult as to which of the following two options will be used for submitting a document for a proposal defense.

- a) **Standard two-chapter option:** In this option, the student would provide two chapters (i.e., Introduction/Literature Review and Methods) that are consistent with the traditional four-chapter format (i.e., Introduction/Literature Review, Methods, Results and Discussion). This would be substantially longer than what one would see in the journal-length proposal option.
- b) **Journal-length proposal option:** In this option, the literature review and methods section would be closer to what one would see in a document of a length appropriate for submission to a peer-reviewed journal. The chair and/or committee may ask for additional supplemental materials which would be included in an Appendix.

¹ The Applied Social and Community Psychology faculty drew on the work of our Departmental colleagues in Developmental Psychology and Industrial/Organizational Psychology in developing this work. We thank them for their thoughtful work on these issues.

Regardless of which proposal option is chosen, the proposal should include the following information:

- A cover page with a “signature block” below the title and author. (To save time later, you can fashion this page after the official title page required by the graduate school: Simply insert “proposal” in place of “thesis” or “dissertation.”)
- An introduction/literature review which describes the background for the proposed work and why it is relevant and important, provides the conceptual justification for the research, and states any explicit hypotheses to be tested.
- A methods section that describes in detail what you will be doing, the equipment and participants involved, and the overall design of your study. The methods should include a description of anticipated analyses you will employ. This section should also discuss how the data to be collected will be used to evaluate the hypotheses or research questions guiding the study and any limitations on such evaluations.
- A list of references.
- Any relevant figures or graphs (e.g., figure with direction of hypothesized interactions; proposed model of variable relationships).

The written proposal should be typed, double-spaced and should follow the usual conventions outlined in the APA Publication Manual. NCSU’s *Thesis and Dissertation Guide* is also relevant for getting an idea of the sections and formatting required by the Graduate School.

Final Defense Document Requirements

Regardless of which proposal defense option was chosen, all students will produce a journal-length document for the defense. A final defense document is the formal recounting of the thesis or dissertation research project that includes the following:

- A cover page with a “signature block” below the title and author. (Use the title page crafted for your proposal. Now you should be able to simply insert “thesis” or “dissertation” in place of “proposal.”)
- All other sections of a thesis or dissertation (abstract, biography, table of contents, list of tables, list of figures, references, etc.) required by the Graduate School. (See the Graduate School’s Thesis and Dissertation Guide.)
- The main text, which will be a self-contained “chapter” consisting of a journal-style manuscript based on your thesis or dissertation work. The length and style should be informed by the types of journals to which the work could be appropriately submitted. This “chapter” will contain all the elements necessary for submission of a manuscript to a journal for peer review. Details are explained thoroughly in the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th Ed.).
- Supplementary materials (e.g., analyses, tables, scales) are included in an Appendix at the discretion of the committee.

Note. For students who present a “standard two chapter” document in the proposal meeting, the committee may decide to affix that proposal as an Appendix in the final approved journal-length thesis / dissertation. In this case, the Reference section would include all references cited in the proposal and final defense documents. Committees should specify at the time of the proposal meeting whether the student will be attaching the proposal to the final approved journal-length thesis / dissertation.

In sum, your final defense document will, at minimum, contain all of the following:

- Abstract
- Title Page
- Biography
- Table of Contents, List of Tables, List of Figures
- Main Text [i.e., self-contained journal-style journal(s)]
- Reference Section
- Appendix (i.e., any supplementary materials deemed necessary)

Approval of the Defense Document

The standard procedures regarding scheduling, constitution of the committee, involvement of the Graduate School Representative, and other administrative matters remain in effect. The usual ETD process of the Graduate School would have to be followed.

The final defense would proceed in the typical manner as specified by the Graduate School. The current standards for assessing the quality of the candidate's research, and the decision-making options (i.e., unconditional approval, conditional approval, and fail), will still apply.

The extent to which committee members' comments must be addressed to reach a final approved document will be determined during the defense meeting.

To reiterate, actual submission of the document for peer review is not required for passing the defense or getting the degree.