



UNITED STATES SPORTS ACADEMY
DOCTORAL DISSERTATION MANUAL

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Part I

The Purpose and Function of a Doctoral Dissertation.....	2
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Part II

The Dissertation Process	3
Selecting a Topic	3
Selecting a Committee	3
Selecting a Methodology	4
Finding and Selecting References.....	6

Part III

Elements of the Dissertation	8
The Abstract.....	8
The Proposal	9
Chapter I.....	10
Chapter II	11
Chapter III.....	11
Power Point Presentation Guidelines	12
Chapter IV.....	13
Chapter V	13
Appendices.....	13
References.....	13

Part IV

The Final Dissertation Product.....	14
Final Dissertation Manuscript Hints.....	14
Final Dissertation Defense Options.....	15

Part V

Appendices.....	16
Item A Sample Title Page	17
Item B Dissertation Proposal and Committee Approval Form.....	18
Item C Registering for Dissertation Hours and Candidacy Status	19

PART I

THE PURPOSE AND FUNCTION OF A DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

The Doctoral Dissertation is an extremely important document, and much thought and planning go into crafting this document. From a learning perspective, the dissertation is the culmination of highly specialized study that yields an original body of work. It implicitly and explicitly offers an academic portrait of its author. As such, it will forever identify its author in the author's chosen field of study and research.

From a professional viewpoint, the dissertation can open doors for the author in promoting the author's career through the ideas, concepts, and arguments which are presented in it. Hence, no research or exploration of this nature should be taken lightly.

At every possible academic juncture, students should integrate the concepts and research opportunities in each of their courses with the general notions of their dissertation. Look for opportunities that might prompt a new direction in the dissertation process or might refine the general dissertation concept into a more focused approach.

In the final analysis, the dissertation *defines* its author and definitively identifies the author with original research unique to the author's specialty in a chosen field.

At the doctoral level there is no other activity that is more important or more significant than the dissertation.

PART II

THE DISSERTATION PROCESS

SELECTING A TOPIC

From the first courses a doctoral candidate takes in the doctoral program, there should be a number of intriguing items, theories, or concepts that pique the candidate's interest. Moving through course work, the candidate should narrow a topic of *general* interest gleaned from those items, theories, and concepts encountered in course work.

A general practice when a candidate narrows the topic of interest entails answering the following questions:

- Does the topic occupy a high level of *singular interest* bordering on *passion* on the part of the candidate?
- Is there enough relevant and current source material to present an original work on the topic of interest?
- Will the ideas to be presented and explored in the dissertation make a significant contribution to the field?
- Does the dissertation's concept present a functional application?
- Will the dissertation's topic be truly original and not merely a re-statement of an already explored and exhausted concept within the field?

In the candidate's search for a suitable topic, discussions with faculty members and other experts in the field should be engaged from time to time. These dialogues will help the candidate sort through any extraneous notions associated with the topic concept allowing the candidate to refine the focus of the dissertation.

Ultimately, it will be the candidate's sincere interest, dedication, focus and passion which will buoy the candidate through the challenging measures which will inherently attend writing the dissertation.

SELECTING A COMMITTEE

Enough emphasis cannot be placed on the selection of a good committee. While this process may seem to be a "given" in the eyes of the candidate, the selection of a good committee should never be taken for granted.

The following considerations should be taken into account by the candidate in selecting a committee:

- The dissertation chairperson must be a member of the Academy's resident faculty or an appropriately credentialed member of the graduate non-resident faculty, approved by the Chief Academic Officer.
- The candidate must select two additional faculty members to serve on the dissertation committee. The candidate has the option of selecting a committee member from Academy or non-Academy faculty members, provided the non-Academy faculty member has held graduate faculty rank at an accredited institution.

- In the event that the candidate selects either a non-resident Academy faculty member or non-Academy faculty member for membership on the committee, these persons must possess a terminal degree in the profession and be approved by the Chief Academic Officer.
- The Chair will be the key person on the committee and, for all intents and purposes, serves as a *quasi*-navigator for the candidate and the committee, who can guide the candidate and the committee smoothly through the entire dissertation process.
- The chair should be someone in whom the candidate can place implicit trust for genuine critical analysis during the dissertation process.
- The chair should have a good knowledge of, or at the very minimum, a sincere familiarity with and appreciation for the candidate's dissertation topic.
- Additional committee members should be familiar with the candidate's work and have the capacity to contribute to the development of the dissertation as it emerges through the candidate's writing.
- All members of the committee should have a functional knowledge of the candidate's dissertation topic.

The candidate *must* select a chair and additional committee members who will offer candid assessments and work as a collegial, constructive entity. At the end of the day, however, it is *your* committee, so asking for guidance can be helpful, but the final decisions on the dissertation and the committee are yours.

SELECTING A METHODOLOGY

There are two types of methodologies from which a doctoral candidate can choose to write the dissertation – *quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods*.

What follows is a very good analysis and comparison of these types of methodologies which was retrieved from http://www.diffen.com/difference/Qualitative_vs_Quantitative. Please take time to fully read and digest the information here in making the appropriate choice for a Dissertation methodology.

While **quantitative research** is based on numbers and mathematical calculations (quantitative data), **qualitative research** is based on written or spoken narratives (**qualitative data**). Qualitative and quantitative research techniques are used in marketing, sociology, psychology, public health and various other disciplines.

Comparison chart

	Qualitative	Quantitative
Character	Humanistic; interpretive	Scientific; objective
Type of data	Free-form, open-ended, narrative	Can be encoded numerically
Examples	Interviews, focus groups, case studies, conversational analysis,	Experiments, closed questions, rating scales
Analysis	Descriptions, experiences, observations, and the human existence has value and contributions to data collection; key words or phrases can be plotted and used to draw conclusions but may not represent the mode number	Numbers, generally in percentages, details the information collected and enables conclusions to be made; does not account for time or experience
Applications	Case studies; understanding feelings and emotions and how they can be applied to situations	Validating a hypothesis or further validating a study statistically

Type of data

Qualitative research gathers data that are free-form and non-numerical, such as diaries, open-ended questionnaires, interviews, and observations that are not coded using a numerical system.

On the other hand, **quantitative research** gathers data that can be coded in numerical form. Examples of quantitative research include experiments or interviews/questionnaires that use closed questions or rating scales to collect information.

Applications of Quantitative and Qualitative Data

Qualitative data and research are used to study individual cases and to find out how people think or feel in detail. It is a major feature of case studies.

Quantitative data and research are used to study trends across large groups in a precise way. Examples include clinical trials or censuses.

When to use qualitative vs. quantitative research?

Quantitative and qualitative research techniques are each suitable in specific scenarios. For example, **quantitative research** has the advantage of scale. It allows for vast amounts of data to be collected – and analyzed – from a large number of people or sources. It is relatively easier to analyze survey responses from thousands of people if the questions are closed-ended and responses can be mathematically encoded in rating scales or preference ranks.

Qualitative research, on the other hand, usually does not scale as well. It is hard, for example, to conduct in-depth interviews with thousands of people or to analyze their responses to open-ended questions. **Qualitative research** works when it is not possible to come up with closed-ended questions. For example, marketers often use focus groups of potential customers to try and gauge what influences brand perception, product purchase decisions, feelings and emotions. In such cases, researchers are usually at very early stages of forming their hypotheses and do not want to

limit themselves to their initial understanding. **Qualitative research** often opens up new options and ideas that quantitative research cannot due to its closed-ended nature.

Analysis of data

Qualitative data can be difficult to analyze, especially at scale, as it cannot be reduced to numbers or used in calculations. Responses may be sorted into themes, and require an expert to analyze. Different researchers may draw different conclusions from the same qualitative material.

Quantitative data can be ranked or put into graphs and tables to make analysis easier.

Data Explosion

Data are being generated at an increasing rate because of the expansion in the number of computing devices and the growth of the Internet. Most of these data are quantitative and special tools and techniques are evolving to analyze this "big data."

Effects of Feedback

The following diagram illustrates the effects of positive and negative feedback on **Qualitative vs Quantitative research**:

EFFECTS OF FEEDBACK		
	Qualitative	Quantitative
POSITIVE	Reinforcing, rewarding or motivating	Moving a value away from its reference value
NEGATIVE	Demotivating, non-rewarding or punishing	Moving a value closer to its reference value
	(Human behavior)	(System parameter)

Candidates are strongly encouraged to confer with their chair of the committee, in the final selection of the methodology which is most appropriate for the topic and its presentation in the Dissertation.

FINDING AND SELECTING REFERENCES

Doctoral candidates often are frustrated when securing the reference sources they would like to have in hand. However, throughout a candidate’s course work there are opportunities to begin collecting sources from the course papers written in the various courses the candidate takes.

Another good approach is to use the article critiques which accompany each course. Saving them as the candidate progresses through courses will begin to amass some very good sources. The work completed for SAR 790, in which candidates are to complete twenty-five article critiques, should serve as a good foundation of sources for the dissertation.

Once the topic has been solidified, candidates can more freely search for reference sources. Obviously, using the Internet in this search can expedite identifying and compiling a good reference source list.

Sources must be appropriate, current, complete, clearly link to the topic, and provide information which will enhance the research and academic contribution the candidate seeks to achieve.

The only caveat is that candidates must be on guard *not to over-do* the source search and know just when to draw the source search to an adequate close.

PART III ELEMENTS OF THE DISSERTATION

THE ABSTRACT

Brief Definition

A dissertation abstract is a brief overview in synopsis format of the main ideas contained in the entire dissertation. The abstract should present the reader with a good idea of the content of the dissertation. In some ways, writing a dissertation abstract is more difficult than writing the dissertation because of space constraints. Clear, concise writing can accomplish the goal of producing an effective dissertation abstract.

Function of Dissertation Abstract

A well-written dissertation abstract allows the reader to obtain a good idea of the main ideas and arguments presented by the dissertation. It serves as an introduction to and a summary of the dissertation. The abstract should present a focused and concise summary of the dissertation and include all of the key terms contained in the dissertation.

Types of Dissertation Abstract

There are two common forms of dissertation abstracts, with a third form much less common. The two common forms are *descriptive* and *informative* dissertation abstracts. *Critical* dissertation abstracts are much less common and represent an evaluation or critique of the dissertation.

A *descriptive dissertation abstract* is more like an outline, presenting a skeleton of the main ideas of the thesis, along with the methodology and scope of the research. Descriptive dissertation abstracts make no attempt to provide conclusions or results of the work.

An *informative abstract* goes a step beyond descriptive abstracts to present a truncated form of the arguments made by the dissertation, along with a summary of the evidence presented within the thesis that supports the arguments.

Structure of Dissertation Abstract (not required for the Proposal)

The particulars of the dissertation abstract's structure at the United States Sports Academy follows the general formatting guidelines. The main title of an abstract is usually titled "Abstract," with the title centered on the page, 2 inches below the margin of the page. Margins should be set at 1 1/4 inches on the top and bottom; 1 1/2 inches on the left, to allow for binding; and 1 inch on the right. The abstract page is generally not numbered but included in the table of contents of the dissertation. Text should be double spaced, using Times New Roman font 12-point. Abstracts should not exceed one page.

Uses for Dissertation Abstract

Dissertation abstracts are often included as part of an academic job application. They are also frequently included in journals and online databases. As such, the abstract should contain relevant keywords to facilitate indexing. The dissertation represents a major academic achievement of the author.

Considerations

A dissertation abstract should not be longer one page. The abstract should not include ideas which will not be presented within the dissertation. Full citations for sources quoted, or excerpted within the abstract, should be included.

Retrieved from: www.ehow.com/about_4814109_what-dissertation-abstract.html

THE PROPOSAL

The following is a suggested guide when writing the *Dissertation Proposal*.

Formatting

- Margins for the dissertation are to be one and one-half inches on the left side and one inch on the right, top and bottom.
- The document should be written in Times New Roman 12 point type with nothing in bold.
- If trying to emphasize a word put it in italics do not put quotation marks around it as this indicates sarcasm per APA Style.
- Page numbers prior to the first chapter should be in Roman numerals (i, ii, iii) centered at the bottom of the page.
- Page numbers for the first page of each chapter should be in Times New Roman, numerical format (1, 2, 3, etc.) centered at the bottom of the page.
- All other page numbers should be in the upper right corner of the page, using the “header” function. in numerical format and Times New Roman.

Voice of the Narrative

- The Proposal should be written in the *third person* (you are the researcher) and in future tense.

Page Sequence

The following is the order of the pages for the dissertation proposal:

- Title page: USSA format an example of which is in SAR790
- Approval form: Provided by the Academy, do not include a Dedication
- Acknowledgements

- Table of Contents: Follow format found in example in every course shell
- List of Tables
- List of Figures
- Abstract
- Chapter I, II, III: See below for full descriptions
- References
- Appendices

CHAPTER I

- **The title of CHAPTER I is INTRODUCTION.**
- Determine a title for your dissertation proposal. The first three chapters of your dissertation become the proposal manuscript. The proposal manuscript **MUST** be orally defended before any data collection or survey can take place.
- Begin Chapter I by developing a narrative which will be interesting or intriguing to a reader about your proposed research study.

Elements of Chapter I

- Statement of the Problem: Explains the general problem or purpose of the study.
- Hypothesis or Hypotheses: These are always stated in the future tense. They can be stated directionally or in the null. You may also have sub-hypotheses related to the main hypothesis. Hypotheses must have the ability to be tested statistically. (Generally not more than 10).
- Research Questions: May be used with or instead of hypotheses. Research questions are frequently used in historical, legal, case study, or qualitative research designs. (Generally not more than 10).
- Definitions of Terms: The terms can be expertly or operationally defined. If expertly defined, include APA reference citation.
- Scope of the Study: A narrative description of the “*who, what, where, why, when, and how*” of your study.
- Delimitations: Voluntary choices made by the researcher which tend to narrow the focus or scope of the study. These are completely controlled by the researcher. Delimitations are made to make the scope of the study more manageable.
- Limitations: These are potential weaknesses of the study which cannot be controlled of the researcher. Every research study has some limitations but too many limitations are indicative of a poorly constructed research design.
- Assumptions: These are items which you cannot specifically test for or control. Some examples include: the subjects responded honestly to the questionnaire; the subjects understood the content of the survey items, etc.
- Significance of the Study: This is the culminating section of Chapter I. What is the need for your study? Why is it important to conduct your research? What contribution will it make to the scholarly literature?

CHAPTER II

- **The title of CHAPTER II is REVIEW OF LITERATURE.**
- This chapter should be written in an extremely objective style. It should report on the scholarly research that has been published for your particular dissertation proposal.
- Example:
 - If the title of the dissertation proposal is:

The Formulation of a Q-Sort to Assess Body-Image in High School Girls

Then, Chapter II needs to include lengthy information about Q-Sort as a measurement or assessment technique as well as findings from previously published studies on body-image. For this particular example, the student researcher would need to seek out information from the measurement, psychology, and physical education literature.

CHAPTER III

- **The title of CHAPTER III is METHODOLOGY.**
- Begin Chapter III with the statement of the problem. Then develop a short narrative designed to transition the reader from the pertinent information presented in Chapter II to the procedures and methodology for your dissertation proposal. The purpose of your study is a good item to include in the short narrative. Chapter III must include procedures for data collection.
- Selection of Subjects:
 - Who will they be? (gender, age, etc.)
 - How many of them?
 - How will they be selected?
 - What will the randomization procedures be, if any?
- Instrumentation:
 - What specific equipment will you be utilizing? Describe the manufacturer, make, model number, year produced. Any relevant information should be presented in depth.
 - If your instrument is a written survey or questionnaire, who developed it? What year was it developed or published? What are the reported reliability and validity coefficients?
 - If you are developing your own survey or questionnaire, what methods are you going to take to obtain reliability and validity for your instrument?
 - Previously developed instruments that are not open source require permission and should be referenced here and in the appendices.
- Procedures:
 - Provide the step-by-step description of what you plan to do to conduct the study.
 - Procedures for data collection must be described in detail.

- Design and Preparation for Data Analysis:
 - What type of research is it?
 - What specific statistics will be used?
 - What types of graphics will be used to assist with presenting and explaining the results? (Bar graphs, tables, figures, pie charts, histograms, etc.).
 - What computer program(s) and version(s) will be used? (SPSS, SAS, MINITAB, MEGASTAT, BioMed, etc.).
- Where will the alpha level be set?
 $p < .05$ $p < .01$ $p < .001$
- All tables and figures must follow the format in the most recent APA manual.

POWER POINT GUIDELINES

This is a suggested guide when creating the PowerPoint presentation for the dissertation proposal defense. It is not intended to be an absolute; nevertheless, any unique departures should receive the approval of the dissertation committee chair.

General Guidelines

- Presentations should be 15-20 minutes in length.
- Students should be prepared to paraphrase the information and not read directly from the slides.
- Slide format and colors should be consistent throughout presentation and transitions should be kept simple.

Presentation Slides

- Chapter One:
 - Title
 - Introduction
 - Statement of the Problem
 - Research Questions/Hypothesis or Hypotheses
 - Scope of the Study
 - Delimitations/Limitations
 - Assumptions
 - Significance of the Study
- Chapter Two:
 - Review of Literature – just key points/studies
- Chapter Three:
 - Selection of Subjects
 - Instrumentation
 - Procedures
 - Design and Preparation for Data Analysis

NOTE:

- PowerPoint should be emailed to the dissertation committee chair at least three business days prior to the proposal defense.

CHAPTER IV

- **Title for CHAPTER IV is RESULTS**
- Include any tables, graphs, or figures to be included in CHAPTER IV
- CHAPTER IV should be written in the *third person* voice
- All results should be reported
- Present NO opinions of the author in this chapter

CHAPTER V

- **Title for CHAPTER V is CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**
- The conclusions section should list each hypothesis or research question and provide a concise finding for each one.
- The discussions section of CHAPTER V is the appropriate place to present personal opinions and observations about the research. The author must be referred to as “the researcher.”
- The final section of CHAPTER V is RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY.

REFERENCES

- List, in alphabetical order, all the references that were cited in the document.
- Follow the format described in the most recent APA Style manual. <http://www.apa.org/>

APPENDICES

- Include copies of any questionnaires or surveys used.
- Include copies of communication granting permission to use questionnaires or surveys, if necessary.
- Include copies of communication requesting subjects to complete the questionnaire or survey.
- Include copies of informed consent, if necessary.
- Include copies of IRB approval.

PART IV THE FINAL DISSERTATION PROJECT

FINAL DISSERTATION MANUSCRIPT HINTS

1. Following the successful defense of your dissertation proposal, make all of the changes to Chapters I-III requested by the members of your dissertation committee. You will also need to change everything in Chapters I, II, and III from *future* tense to *past* tense.
2. Chapters III, IV and V should start with the statement of the problem written exactly the same for each chapter.
3. Once you receive final proposal approval and IRB approval you may begin your data collection.
4. Consult a statistician and/or computer expert in your home area for any help you may need with your data analysis.
5. Remember that the Design and Preparation for Data Analysis section of Chapter III must have the following information:
 - What type of research was conducted?
 - What specific statistics were used?
 - What types of graphics were generated or used to assist with presenting and explaining the results? (Bar graphs, tables, pie charts, histograms, etc.).
 - What computer program(s) and version(s) were used? (SPSS, SAS, MINITAB, MEGASTAT, BioMed, etc.).
 - Where was the alpha level set?
 $p < .05$ $p < .01$ $p < .001$
6. The title of CHAPTER IV is RESULTS. Include any tables, graphs, or figures. This chapter should be written in the third person and all results should be reported. Do not present any of your own opinions in Chapter IV.
7. The title of CHAPTER V is CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS.
 - The conclusions section should list each hypothesis or research question and provide a concise finding for each one. Ensure that hypotheses and research questions are written EXACTLY as they were in Chapter I.
 - The discussion section of Chapter V is the appropriate place to make your personal opinions and observations about the research. Refer to yourself as the researcher.

- The last section is the recommendations for further study.
8. All tables and figures should be labeled in numerical order with the chapter number followed by the table number (4.1, 4.2, etc.). Refer to most recent APA Style manual.

FINAL DISSERTATION DEFENSE OPTIONS

On-Campus Final Defense

Even though the Academy delivers its course work entirely online, doctoral candidates wishing to make their dissertation defenses in person on the Daphne, Alabama, campus are encouraged to do so. The following serve as guidelines for this format of presentation:

- After a successful proposal defense, the committee chair will notify the doctoral candidate of readiness to present for the final dissertation defense
- This implies that Chapter IV and Chapter V are suitable for presentation within a complete dissertation
- The doctoral candidate will coordinate the date and time with the committee chair
- The doctoral candidate will notify *in writing* the Dean of Academic Affairs and the Academic Affairs Administrative Assistant of the intention to present on-campus to accommodate scheduling of facilities, equipment, and personnel
- All members of the committee will need to be present either in person or via videoconference, but this will not inhibit a doctoral candidate's wish to present on-campus
- The presenting student will provide the committee Members with the necessary materials, e.g., PowerPoint Presentation, copies of the dissertation for review, at least three (3) days before the scheduled defense.

Final Defense by Video Conference

The Academy's Technology Department has successfully developed a video conference process which allows doctoral candidates to make their final dissertation defenses online.

The technological requirements for doctoral candidates to have a successful dissertation defense through video conference include the following:

1. A computer running Microsoft Windows, Apple OS X, or Linux.
2. A headphone/microphone head-set or the built-in microphone and speaker if you are using a laptop.
3. A PC-compatible webcam - sometimes already built into your laptop.
4. A broadband/internet connection. (broadband should be a wired connection if possible)

PART V
APPENDIX – Dissertation Manual

- Item A Title Page
- Item B Approval Form
- Item C Registration for Dissertation Hours and
 Doctoral Candidacy Status

Item A – Title Page

UNITED STATES SPORTS ACADEMY

Title of dissertation

A dissertation submitted to
the faculty of the United States Sports Academy
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Degree of

Doctor of Education in
Sports Management

by

Your name

chair: Dr. First & Last Name

Daphne, Alabama

Month Year

Item B – Approval Form

**UNITED STATES SPORTS ACADEMY
DISSERTATION PROPOSAL AND COMMITTEE APPROVAL FORM**

Student Name _____ **Date** _____
Please Print Month/Day/Year

Degree: Select One:
Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) _____
Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) with Emphasis in Sports Medicine, Olympism,
Sports Coaching, Sports Theory, or Sports Fitness & Health __

Proposed Title (should be 12 words or less):

Thesis/Dissertation Fee Submitted _____

Dissertation Committee	Name (Please print)
Committee chair	_____
Email address and Skype Address:	_____

Committee Member (First Reader)	_____
Email address and Skype Address:	_____

Committee Member (Second Reader)	_____
Email address and Skype Address:	_____

Approvals:

Committee chair	
<input type="checkbox"/> Name (Please print)	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Signature	_____

Director of Doctoral Studies	
<input type="checkbox"/> Name (Please print)	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Signature	_____

Chief Academic Officer	
<input type="checkbox"/> Name (Please print)	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Signature	_____

Check Appropriate Action

Approved:	_____
Approved Conditionally:	_____
Not Approved:	_____

Copies Given To (check when completed)

Committee chair:	_____
Registrar:	_____
Student File:	_____
Academic Admin Asst.	_____

Item C - Registration for Dissertation Hours and Candidacy Status

REGISTERING FOR THE DISSERTATION AND DOCTORAL CANDIDACY STATUS

Upon completion of all coursework (54 semester credit hours *including* the mentorship) and passing of the doctoral portfolio, doctoral students are eligible to register for dissertation hours (SPT 799) and simultaneously gain the status of “doctoral candidate.”

What follows is a set of guidelines for this process.

1. Upon completion of all coursework (54 semester credit hours) doctoral students must ensure that all work of the doctoral portfolio is submitted. Once all portfolio work is submitted students must notify their portfolio advisors to review and assess the portfolio.
2. After receiving a passing grade for the portfolio, students should begin to organize and construct the dissertation committee.

Located in the *Addenda* of the student’s governing catalog there is a form titled “DISSERTATION PROPOSAL APPROVAL.” This form must be filled out entirely and submitted to the Director of Doctoral Studies. More on the committee can be found on Page 2 of this *Manual*.

3. Once the approval form has been submitted, students may register for SPT 799 in the student portal. Students may register for 3 to 12 credit hours for the dissertation.

It is highly recommended that students only register for 3 semester hours each semester until the dissertation is complete.

Financial Aid will cover this tuition as with other credit hours.

There is also a \$1,500 dissertation processing fee which must be paid along with the first tuition payment. Financial Aid will cover this fee as well.

4. Once the Registrar receives the approval form and payment is submitted students will be enrolled in the SPT 799 course.

NOTE: *There is no LMS course shell for SPT 799.* Students will be communicating through phone and email with the chair and committee members.

5. Beginning with the Fall Semester 2015, doctoral candidates who fail to register for consecutive semesters of SPT 799 must pay a continuation fee of \$500.00 for each semester in which there is no registration for at least three semester hours of SPT 799.