

General University Policy
CSU Stanislaus Graduate Council

Approved by the Academic Senate on November 9, 2010
Approved by President Shirvani on December 17, 2010

Dissertation Requirements
The Graduate School
California State University, Stanislaus

1. Authorization to offer Doctorate Degree

CSU Stanislaus is authorized to offer the EdD degree (Educational Doctorate). It is anticipated that the California State University system may receive authorization to offer other doctorate degrees in the future. The purpose of this policy is to set forth minimum standards and guidelines for all doctoral dissertations or the equivalent that are written at the University.

2. Requirement for the Dissertation

If a dissertation is required as a part of a doctoral program offered at CSU Stanislaus-the dissertation will normally consist of no fewer than 20 percent of the total units required for the doctoral degree. Each program shall establish the number of units required for the dissertation as well as the required number of semesters for enrollment in a dissertation course.

3. Definition of the Dissertation

Title 5 California Code of Regulations 40511.5.A-B states: *The dissertation shall be the written product of systematic, rigorous research on a significant professional issue. The dissertation is expected to contribute to an improvement in professional practices or policy. It shall evidence originality, critical and independent thinking, appropriate form and organization, and a rationale. The dissertation shall identify the research problem and question(s), state the major theoretical perspectives, explain the significance of the undertaking, relate it to the relevant scholarly and professional literature, set forth the appropriate sources for and methods of gathering and analyzing the data, and offer a conclusion or recommendation.*

4. Standards for the Dissertation

Specific requirements and standards for the dissertation shall be established by the individual doctoral programs and must comply with all appropriate laws, regulations, executive orders and accreditation requirements which authorize and govern the offering of the specific doctoral degree. Programs shall provide students with specific instructions and requirements for dissertation content and required number of units and courses for the doctoral dissertation. All dissertations shall be written using requirements established by the specific doctoral program for dissertation style and format.

The quality of the writing, format, and documentation shall meet standards approved by the doctoral program which offers the degree and be consistent with the dictates of a style manual authorized by the specific program.

Within the framework established for dissertations by each doctoral program, the dissertation shall identify a concise and important research problem and question(s), state the major theoretical perspectives, explain the significance of the undertaking, relate it to the relevant scholarly and professional literature, set forth the appropriate sources for and methods of gathering and analyzing the data, and offer a conclusion and recommendations for further research. It shall include a written abstract that summarizes the significance of the work, objectives, methodology, and a conclusion or recommendation. The dissertation shall be the written product of rigorous research on a significant issue

within the field of study. It shall evidence originality, critical and independent thinking, appropriate form and organization, and a rationale for the examined research problem.

5. Assessment

The Graduate Council shall conduct periodic comprehensive assessments of the overall quality of dissertations and dissertation processes. Such assessment shall include a meta-review by external reviewer(s) whose findings and recommendations for improvement shall be reported to the Graduate School in the aggregate. The assessment methodology shall be constructed to provide evidence of the direct assessment of student learning by evaluating the degree to which dissertations, in the aggregate, demonstrate achievement of graduate learning goals.

6. Advancement to Doctoral Candidacy Status

Each doctoral program shall establish procedures for the advancement to doctoral candidacy status or the equivalent if applicable. Normally, doctoral candidacy status shall be granted upon completion of core doctoral course work and successfully passing a qualifying examination or the equivalent. Students shall not begin formal work on their dissertations until they have been granted doctoral candidacy status or the equivalent.

7. Dissertation Committee

The dissertation committee shall be composed of a minimum of three members; two of the members must be full-time tenured or tenure track doctoral program faculty, and the committee chair shall hold the rank of associate professor or higher. When appropriate or required, an individual who is not a member of the University faculty may be selected as the third member to serve on the dissertation committee. All members of the dissertation committee shall hold an appropriate doctoral degree and have relevant professional experience and expertise in the area of the dissertation. The director of a specific doctoral program may approve no more than one exception to the membership criteria stated above if an individual nominated for a dissertation committee has expertise particularly relevant to the candidate's dissertation research.

Minimum criteria for the number of committee members, selection of the chair and committee members, required expertise of members, specific requirements for the chair, and requirements for the members shall be determined by the program and comply with the university regulations. The process for approval of dissertation committee appointments shall be established by each program and shall be approved by the college dean.

8. Dissertation Proposal Development and Oral Defense of the Dissertation Proposal

At a minimum, the dissertation proposal shall consist of a concise and thorough introduction to the research problem, a comprehensive literature review, and a clearly stated and appropriate research framework and plan of action to conduct the dissertation research. The proposal shall also contain relevant appendices and references and conform to all applicable style standards adopted by the program. The committee chair shall determine, with input from the committee members, when the student's dissertation proposal is ready for the oral defense process.

Upon completion of the draft dissertation proposal, the student shall undergo an oral defense of the dissertation proposal. The preliminary oral defense of the dissertation proposal is to provide a critical examination and assessment of the appropriateness of and justification for the dissertation's focus as demonstrated in the introduction and literature review sections, and soundness of the student's research plans.

Each doctoral program shall establish procedures for the development and defense process for the dissertation proposal which comply with university regulations and shall be approved by the college dean.

Each program shall establish procedures for approving the student's final dissertation proposal. Each program shall establish procedures to assure that a positive and constructive environment is maintained at all times during the dissertation proposal and defense processes.

9. University Institutional Review Board and Other Appropriate Research Compliance Authorizations

Upon approval of the dissertation proposal that contains research with human subjects, the student with the assistance of the committee chair, shall submit the proposal to the University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) and shall not commence the research study until IRB approval has been granted. If the dissertation research involves live vertebrate animals, it shall be reviewed and approved by the Animal Welfare Committee. Research involving radioactive or hazardous waste materials shall be reviewed and approved by the University Risk Management Officer. In addition, as required by the program or the research proposal, other appropriate research compliance approvals shall be obtained before a student can commence with the research study.

10. Registration for Dissertation Units

A student shall be assigned a dissertation chair and have reached doctoral candidacy status level in the program in order to register for dissertation units. Students shall complete the appropriate special registration form provided by enrollment services each semester they enroll for dissertation credit. In the event that a student has not completed the dissertation by the time she or he has earned the required units, the student will be required to enroll in an approved dissertation completion course on a no credit basis for all subsequent semesters until completion of the dissertation.

11. Timeframe for Completion of the Dissertation

Each program shall establish a timeframe for completing the dissertation; however, consistent with Title 5, of the California Code of Regulations and CSU Stanislaus policy work on the doctoral degree, including the completion of the dissertation, shall not extend beyond a total of seven consecutive years.

12. Co-authors Not Permitted for Dissertations

No coauthored dissertations are permitted. If two or more candidates are collaborating on a research project, each shall develop, write, and submit a separate and distinct dissertation.

13. Dissertation Defense Process and Final Committee Approval

The Dissertation Committee shall conduct a final rigorous oral examination, open to the public, during which time the candidate defends the dissertation. The process for the final dissertation oral defense shall be established by each program.

14. Process for University Level Review Once the Dissertation is Approved by the Committee

When the dissertation has been accepted and signed off by the Dissertation Committee, Program Director, and college Dean, a copy (unbound) of the original shall be delivered to the University dissertation reader in the University Library to ensure conformity to the university format guidelines. The Library shall notify students if any revisions or corrections are to be made. A dissertation clearance form will be issued after the final version of the dissertation is in electronic format and submitted and accepted by the University Library.

15. Electronic Publishing of Dissertation

All completed and approved dissertations shall be published electronically in accordance with procedures and guidelines established by the University Library, Graduate School and the program offering the degree.