



Doctor of Social Work

Program and Dissertation Handbook

2024-2025

Doctor of Social Work
TRANSFORMATIVE LEADERSHIP
MILLERSVILLE UNIVERSITY OF
PENNSYLVANIA

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MILLERSVILLE UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SERVICES DEAN: DR. LARA M. WILLOX

EMAIL: LARA.WILLOX@MILLERSVILLE.EDU

OFFICE PHONE: (717) 871-7333

OFFICE STAYER HALL, ROOM 301

OFFICE TELEPHONE: (717) 871-7206

OFFICE FAX: (717) 871-7941

WEBSITE: [HTTPS://WWW.MILLERSVILLE.EDU/SOCIALWORK/](https://www.millersville.edu/socialwork/)

MU DSW PROGRAM DIRECTOR: DR. MARC FELIZZI

EMAIL: MARC.FELIZZI@MILLERSVILLE.EDU

OFFICE PHONE: (717) 871-7161

OFFICE LOCATION: STAYER HALL ROOM 312

MU SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK DEPARTMENT CHAIR: DR. KAREN RICE

EMAIL: KAREN.RICE@MILLERSVILLE.EDU

OFFICE PHONE: (717) 871-5297

OFFICE LOCATION: STAYER HALL ROOM 307

MU SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK SECRETARY: MS. CHRISTINE KOLENDA,

EMAIL: CHRISTINE.KOLENDA@MILLERSVILLE.EDU

OFFICE PHONE: (717) 871-7170

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This manual does not create contractual rights in favor of the student, the universities, agencies, or accrediting bodies. The Millersville University DSW program reserves the exclusive right to modify its academic program and this handbook without notice. Any problems that may occur that are not covered by the policies spelled out in this handbook will be addressed on a case-by-case basis through established procedures.

History

The Millersville University DSW program admitted its first students in the fall of 2015, after several years of planning and development. Since that time, the program has awarded degrees to over 35 students, who are now serving as leaders and executives in the profession, and as teaching faculty in a number of higher education institutions across the United States. Students from all over the world have been admitted to the program since its inception in 2015, and the program has evolved to meet the ever-changing needs of the Social Work profession. The program concentrates on providing a Transformative Leadership focus for students. Using this lens, students are better prepared to address the dynamic and changing needs of the profession.

About DSW Program Millersville University

The organizational content of the program. Millersville University of Pennsylvania is an institution of higher education offering programs of study leading to the Doctoral degree and is a member of the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education.

DSW Program Mission:

The doctorate in social work (DSW) of Millersville University educates future social work scholars who can transform both organizations and educational environments through innovative instruction and values of anti-oppression, diversity, equity, and inclusion.

PROGRAM ROLES

Roles

Student: The Doctor of Social Work student is completing the DSW degree. The student is an active learner, helping to shape educational learning experiences to fit educational goals and interests. Goals should include developing proficiency in program skills.

Instructor: The instructor is responsible for structuring student learning experiences to provide opportunities for students to attain each course's learning objectives. Instructors should facilitate the active learner's combination of professional interests and course learning objectives when requested. The instructor is also responsible for being available for consultation in person or through some other medium to address individual student needs. Instructors are responsible for assessing student achievement of learning objectives and assigning a grade for each course.

Dissertation Committee Chair: The Dissertation Chair guides the student through completing an independent research study. The Chair is a regular full-time, tenure-track faculty member within the Millersville University School of Social Work program.

Dissertation Committee Member: The Dissertation Committee Member provides the student with input throughout the dissertation completion process, particularly as it relates to that member's area of expertise. The members are selected between the students and the Dissertation Chair and can be members outside the School of Social Work, including other disciplines. The Committee Members must hold their discipline's terminal degree.

Millersville University: [Millersville University College Thesis and Dissertation Guidelines and Requirements](#)

Academic Advisor: The identified advisor at university of original application (usually the program director) provides academic advising sessions throughout the program and, in consultation with the Dissertation Chair, guides students through the identification and selection of electives that will enhance students' knowledge and skills related to area of practice or dissertation.

Program Director: A faculty member within the university of the original application responsible for providing ongoing collaboration with his or her counterpart at the sister university; facilitating the development, articulation, and dissemination of program policy manuals and procedures; coordinating the development and evaluation of curricula; assisting in marketing and recruitment activities; managing community-based program advisory board; coordinating admission procedures, comprehensive examinations, and advising; and coordinating residency experiences.

Department Chair: All department processes, including faculty assignment to dissertation functions, must be approved by the Department Chair.

Advisory Board Members: Advisory board members play several integral roles in the program, including informing the administrators of the community's current needs and ongoing program improvement.

Faculty Mentor: Students will be offered the opportunity to work with a faculty mentor during their time in the program. At the Fall Residency, first year students will be administered a survey asking them to discuss their topics of interest, what they need to be supported during their doctoral journey, and what type of mentoring they are seeking. Faculty mentors will be matched to the students. While not their dissertation chair or academic advisor, the faculty mentors will help guide students through the processes of the doctoral program, and will serve as a "sounding board" for any issues students may have during their time in the program.

PROGRAM Skills

The Doctor of Social Work is comprised of an outcome-based curriculum. The curriculum including coursework, electives, and residencies is continuously evaluated based upon the students' ability to demonstrate a series of skills. These skills are operationalized via specific practice behaviors and are evaluated using multiple measures.

Student Learning Outcome	Student Learning Experience
<p>1) Advance practice through innovative approaches and/or use and critically evaluate research and knowledge.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SOWK 700 (SW Leadership I): Transformative Social Work Leadership • SOWK 701 (SW Leadership II): Leadership for Organizational Change • SOWK 704 (SW Teacher/Scholar I): Foundations for Social Work Educators • SOWK 705 (SW Teacher/Scholar II): Innovative Praxis for Social Work Educators • SOWK 710: Research Methodology • SOWK 715: Multivariate Statistical Analysis • SOWK 720 (Leadership/Teaching Praxis I): Theorizing Change for Social Work • SOWK 721 (Leadership/Teaching Praxis II): Transformative Policy & Practice • SOWK 725: Intervention Research • SOWK 730: (Qualitative Analysis) Qualitative Research and Analysis • SOWK 774: Comprehensive Seminar • SOWK 775: Dissertation Seminar • SOWK 776 (Dissertation I): Dissertation Proposal Implementation • SOWK 777 (Dissertation II): Dissertation
<p>2) Engage in systematic inquiry that adheres to scholarly conventions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SOWK 701: Leadership of Organizational Change • SOWK 710: Research Methodology • SOWK 715: Multivariate Statistical Analysis • SOWK 720: Theorizing Change for Social Work • SOWK 725: Intervention Research • SOWK 730: Qualitative Research and Analysis • SOWK 774: Comprehensive Seminar • SOWK 775: Dissertation Seminar • SOWK 776: Dissertation Proposal Implementation • SOWK 777: Dissertation

3) Develop and disseminate practice-relevant knowledge through a variety of channels, such as teaching, scholarship, professional presentations, mentoring, and administration.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SOWK 704: Foundations for Social Work Educators • SOWK 705: Innovative Praxis for Social Work Educators • SOWK 710: Research Methodology • SOWK 730: Qualitative Research and Analysis • SOWK 774: Comprehensive Seminar • SOWK 775: Dissertation Seminar • SOWK 776: Dissertation Proposal Implementation • SOWK 777: Dissertation
4) Provide leadership in social work practice and/or education.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SOWK 701: Leadership for Organizational Change • SOWK 705: Innovative Praxis for Social Work Educators • SOWK 720: Theorizing Change for Social Work • SOWK 774: Comprehensive Seminar • SOWK 775: Dissertation Seminar • SOWK 776: Dissertation Proposal Implementation • SOWK 777: Dissertation
5) Develop and maintain substantive expertise in one or more areas of social work practice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SOWK 700: Transformative Social Work Leadership • SOWK 701: Leadership for Organizational Change • SOWK 705: Innovative Praxis for Social Work Educators • SOWK 715: Multivariate Statistical Analysis • SOWK 725: Intervention Research • SOWK 730: Qualitative Research and Analysis • SOWK 774: Comprehensive Seminar • SOWK 775: Dissertation Seminar • SOWK 776: Dissertation Proposal Implementation • SOWK 777: Dissertation

Doctor of Social Work Curriculum

The DSW program curriculum includes coursework in Leadership, Teaching, Research, and Theory and prepares students to complete a dissertation on a topic of their choosing. Fostering interprofessional

education, our students' complete electives taught by professors in other disciplines such as nursing, education, business, and psychology.

Degree Requirements. DSW degree requirements include a 48-credit curriculum with two electives and an independent dissertation within seven years of enrollment.

CURRICULUM OVERVIEW

- Total Credits: 48
- Format: Online, Cohort Model with Intensive Weekend Residency each semester (Fall, Spring, Summer)
- Courses per semester: 2 (Fall, Spring, Summer)
- Time to Completion: 3 Academic Years
- Semesters Attending:
 - Year I: Fall, Spring, Summer
 - Year II: Fall, Spring, Summer
 - Year III: Fall, Spring

Course Offerings

DSW Courses include four theory- based courses in Leadership, Education, and Teaching; Four research courses; one policy course; two elective courses; a comprehensive seminar; and a dissertation seminar. Each course is specifically developed to provide student learning experiences that allow graduates to demonstrate proficiency in the program's learning outcomes and leads to the completion of the dissertation .

COURSE PROGRESSION 48 Credits

(Note that curriculum review can result in modifications as needed)

	Fall	Spring	Summer
Year I	700 Transformative SW Leadership (SW Leadership I) 704 Foundations for SW Educators (SW Teacher/Scholar I)	701 Leadership for Organizational Change (SW Leadership II) 705 Innovative Praxis for SW Educators (SW Teacher/Scholar II)	710 Research Methodology 720 Theorizing Change for SW (Leadership/Teaching Praxis I)
Year II	725 Intervention Research	774 Comprehensive Seminar	721 Transformative SW Policy & Practice (Leadership/Teaching Praxis II)

	730 Qualitative Research & Analysis (Qualitative Analysis)	715 Multivariate Statistical Analysis	775 Dissertation Seminar
Year III	776 Dissertation I Graduate Elective	777 Dissertation II Graduate Elective	

COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

700 Transformative SW Leadership (SW Leadership I)

This is the first of a sequence of two courses on advanced leadership and management for Doctor of Social Work students. Students will glean a theoretical orientation to the study of organizations and leadership within organizations. This examination of theories will reflect the values of the social work profession and their application to social service systems, structures, and processes. Also explored will be theories of organizational change, organizational challenges, and organizational effectiveness. Within the context of social service organizations, leadership approaches and theories are also examined. 3 s.h. 3 c.h. Prerequisite: Acceptance into the DSW program or permission of the chair of the department.

Students will:

- Understand selected theories of organizational functioning.
- Utilize strategies and methods available to influence organizational behavior.
- Recognize leadership approaches and their application to organizational contexts.
- Facilitate organizational change toward innovative practice.

701 Leadership for Organizational Change (SW Leadership II)

This is the second course in the advanced leadership and management sequence. This course focuses on developing knowledge and skills for social work managers within the public and private social service sector. Additional attention will be given to leading in times of fiscal constraint, political changes, and workforce challenges. 3 s.h. 3 c.h. Prerequisite: SOWK/SWK700 Transformative SW Leadership (SW Leadership I) or permission of the chair of the department.

Students will:

- Incorporate historic and current theories of management into administrative practice.
- Identify management tasks within varied organizational environments.
- Develop an understanding of relevant administrative practices and principles.
- Recognize the role of management in producing and implementing change within an agency.
- Understand the values and ethics involved in managing human service organizations.
- Become familiar with managerial challenges within a political environment.
- Apply management concepts and skills to a variety of situations.

704 Foundations for SW Educators (SW Teacher/Scholar I)

This is the first of a sequence of two courses on social work teaching and scholarship for Doctor of Social Work students. The course will enable the students to critically examine seminal and contemporary works in pedagogy. The connection of these theories to social work teaching and learning will be a central component of this course, including particular emphasis on the historical evolution of social work education. The course provides students with an opportunity to explore seminal works from a historical perspective and critically evaluate contemporary theories of teaching and learning in social work. Preparation for the second course in the sequence in which students develop a unique and personal conceptual framework for their own teaching. 3 s.h. 3 c.h. Prerequisite: Acceptance into the DSW program or permission of the chair of the department.

Students will:

- Categorize and discriminate among seminal and contemporary theories of education in social work.
- Critically examine and appraise theories of social work relative to the Code of Ethics of the National Association of Social Work
- Demonstrate the beginnings of the process of adopting the professional identity of the social work scholar-practitioner in part through adoption of the attributes of the life-long learner and the conscious use of the professional self.

705 Innovative Praxis for SW Educators (SW Teacher/Scholar II)

This is the second in a sequence of two courses about social work teaching and scholarship for Doctor of Social Work students. The course provides students with an opportunity to critically evaluate theories of teaching and learning, particularly in contemporary settings in social work. Students will craft a conceptual framework to guide their career as instructors in various social work settings, including undergraduate and graduate professional social work education. They will practice course planning and delivery along with program development and student/course/program assessment with attention to accreditation requirements. In addition, they will develop understanding of the roles of the social work teacher-scholar in academe and other settings. 3 s.h. 3 c.h. Prerequisite: SOWK/SWK704 Foundations for SW Educators (SW Teacher/Scholar I) or permission of the chair of the department.

Students will:

- Identify, articulate, and synthesize theories of social work education for their own practice.
- Design, effectively deliver, and evaluate curricula for diverse learners consistent with evidence-based teaching practice.
- Demonstrate self-reflection to assess and continuously improve teaching effectiveness in the context of a mentoring relationship.
- Demonstrate an understanding of teaching, scholarship, service responsibilities, and career progression in the academy.
- Apply setting-appropriate accreditation standards to curriculum development.

710 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This course provides a connection between social science theory building and research. It explores in depth the logic of research and the stages of the scientific process. Central to this course are also the major methods, designs, techniques, and strategies in the practice of social research. The role of research in social work practice and the strengths and limitations of various approaches, designs,

methods, and techniques will be examined. Of particular importance will be the students' development of skill for designing proposals for evidence-based ethical research. While qualitative and mixed methods will be covered, the major emphasis of the course will be on quantitative approaches and analytical techniques. Knowledge and skill learned in this course will constitute the building block for subsequent research related coursework in the DSW program and the completion of a successful dissertation.

Students will:

- Critically review and synthesize knowledge.
- Locate, adapt, and apply evidence-based interventions to specific populations/biopsychosocial challenges consistent with social work values as articulated by the National Association of Social Workers.
- Understand uses of information management systems.
- Understand information collection, storage, and manipulation.

715 MULTIVARIATE STATISTICAL ANALYSIS (MULTIVARIATE ANALYSIS)

Doctoral students will practice descriptive, univariate, and bivariate inferential statistics, and multiple regression. Further, students will gain a foundation in repeated measures analysis, logistic regression, and multivariate analysis of variance. Students will use multivariate analysis to conduct meta-analysis of literature and the evaluation of programs.

Students will:

- Critically review and synthesize knowledge.
- Apply multivariate statistical analysis for research and evaluation.
- Use multivariate statistical analysis to initiate and carry out evaluation of process, outcome, and continuous improvement.

SOWK 720: THEORIZING CHANGE FOR SOCIAL WORK (LEADERSHIP TEACHING PRAXIS I)

This course is designed to provide students with an opportunity to demonstrate mastery of the course content from the program's first year's courses. Students will participate in supervisory leadership and/or teaching activities that provide experiential learning and application and integration of theory and skills acquired in earlier coursework. Weekly meetings are a required component of this course and the meetings will be facilitated by the faculty mentor to instruct, guide, and assess student's progress related to the leadership and/or teaching praxis.

Students will:

- Carry out ethical decision making for leadership.
- Conduct strategic planning.
- Develop advanced strategies and skills for engagement and change with simple and complex client systems.
- Create and apply advanced differential models/approaches to leadership and supervision, including volunteer leadership, fundraising, grant writing, budgeting, and cost-benefit analysis.
- Develop innovative programming with input from all levels of staff and stakeholders.
- Facilitate policy development and implementation to meet community needs.
- Facilitate organizational change toward innovative practice.
- Locate, adapt, and apply evidence-based interventions to specific settings/client populations.
- Carry out clinical team leadership.

- Critically review and synthesize knowledge.
- Initiate and carry out evaluation of process, outcome, and continuous improvement.
- Assess communities for readiness for change.
- Assess organizations for readiness for change.

SOWK 721 Transformative Practice & Policy (Leadership Teaching Praxis II)

This course is designed to provide students with an opportunity to demonstrate proficiency in the course content from the program's first year. Students will participate in supervisory leadership and/or teaching activities that provide experiential learning and application and integration of theory and skills acquired in earlier coursework. Weekly meetings are a required component of this course, and the meetings will be facilitated by a faculty member to instruct, guide, and assess student's progress related to leadership and/or teaching praxis. A Pass/Fail grading model will be used for these courses.

- Locate, adapt, and apply evidence-based interventions to specific populations/biopsychosocial challenges consistent with social work values as articulated by the National Association of Social Workers.
- Understand uses of information management systems.
- Use current software for information processing.
- Understand information collection, storage, and manipulation.
- Conceptualize and construct social work theory for teaching and leadership.
- Use qualitative research methodology and grounded theory to develop social work practice theory.
- Demonstrate proficiency in one selected social theory: critically evaluate empirical data, inform professional decision-making.
- Design curricula for a diversity of learners and learning styles consistent with evidence based teaching practice.
- Categorize and discriminate among seminal and contemporary theories of education in social work.
- Critically examine and appraise theories of social work relative to the NASW Code of Ethics.
- Synthesize, justify, and internalize selections of theories of social work education for practice.
- Effectively deliver curriculum using such techniques of adult learning as constructive and collaborative learning, distance education and technologically-enhanced education.
- Demonstrate effective instructional techniques including the use of self-reflection to assess and continuously improve teaching effectiveness.
- Apply CSWE EPAS to implicit and explicit curriculum development.
- Evaluate course efficacy.
- Understanding career progression in the academy.
- Adopt attributes of the life-long learner.
- Integrate mentoring experiences into academic development.
- Understand teaching, scholarship, and service responsibilities in the academy.

725 INTERVENTION RESEARCH

This advanced research course will introduce students to the five steps of intervention development, testing, and dissemination. Students will be given the opportunity to practice elements of these stages to master the strategies of implementing, documenting, and evaluating interventions that respond to social problems affecting systems of all sizes (e.g., individual, family, group, community).

Students will:

- Critically review and synthesize knowledge.
- Initiate and carry out evaluation of process, outcome, and continuous improvement.
- Assess communities for readiness for change.
- Assess organizations for readiness for change.
- Locate, adapt, and apply evidence-based interventions to specific populations/biopsychosocial challenges consistent with social work values as articulated by the National Association of Social Workers.
- Understand uses of information management systems.
- Use current software for information processing.
- Understand information collection, storage, and manipulation.

730 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH & ANALYSIS (QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS)

This course prepares doctoral students to understand the core process of qualitative study including the study design, data analysis techniques, and ethics. The students will study qualitative research strategies including designs like case study and ethnography and data analysis methods like narrative and grounded theory. The course design provides opportunities to learn the tools to enhance and critically evaluate the rigor of a qualitative study as well as to write research proposals, report findings, and identify how knowledge of social work practice, policy, and education can be advanced through qualitative research.

Students will:

- Critically review and synthesize knowledge.
- Initiate and carry out qualitative evaluation of process, outcome, and continuous improvement.
- Assess communities for readiness for change using qualitative data and analysis.
- Assess organizations for readiness for change using qualitative data and analysis.
- Locate, adapt, and apply evidence-based interventions to specific populations/biopsychosocial challenges consistent with social work values as articulated by the National Association of Social Workers.
- Understand uses of information management systems for qualitative data.
- Use current qualitative research software for information processing.
- Understand qualitative information collection, storage, and manipulation.

774 COMPREHENSIVE SEMINAR

Students will engage in a collaborative learning experience in which they assess whether as doctoral students they have acquired the knowledge and skills necessary for proceeding with the development of a Doctoral Dissertation. Utilizing a phenomenon of interest, students will demonstrate their ability to conceptualize a clear and compelling research topic by organizing, presenting, and critiquing both theoretical and empirical knowledge related to the phenomenon. Further, students will identify areas needing further exploration and research methods to conduct the proposed research. The Comprehensive Paper should demonstrate that the student has acquired a sufficiently broad understanding of the phenomenon of interest and indicate that the student is prepared to add to knowledge in the field through an in-depth study of a topic relevant to best practices in social work as related to leadership, teaching, or both. Students will provide an oral defense of their comprehensive paper. The defense will include an overview of the phenomenon and a summary of the research question that could be used should students continue with the same topic for their dissertation. A Pass/Fail grading model will be used for this course.

Students will:

- Demonstrate the acquisition of a sufficiently broad understanding of leadership, education, and relevant research principles.
- Demonstrate the ability to add to evidence-based knowledge in the discipline as related to leadership, teaching, or both.
- Design and defend a document that conceptualizes a phenomenon of interest, organizing, presenting, and critiquing theoretical and empirical knowledge, identifying areas needing further exploration, and identifying research methods.

775 DISSERTATION SEMINAR

Students will engage in a collaborative learning experience in which they explore different ways of knowing in social sciences. They will become familiar with a variety of theoretical perspectives (based upon the interests of the group) and will practice integrating those theories with their professional social work practice as they work toward formulating a research question and identifying a relevant theoretical perspective from which to examine it in the upcoming dissertation. Ethical considerations in research will be examined, and students will become familiar with their institution's IRB process. Dissertation process will be considered, including the development of the dissertation committee. In addition, students will consider deeply the relationship between their education and their future roles as leaders and educators. A Pass/Fail grading model will be used for this course. Students will:

- Demonstrate proficiency in one selected social theory: critically evaluate empirical data, inform professional decision-making.
- Adopt attributes of the life-long learner.
- Integrate mentoring experiences into academic development.
- Understand the professional and civic responsibilities of the social work leader and scholar.

SOWK 776 Dissertation I

Over two semesters, students will work in close consultation with a faculty member to build upon the research question crafted in the Dissertation Seminar. They will gain institutional approval to conduct their independent research and will conduct the research under the supervision of the faculty member. A focus will be placed on the completion of a traditional dissertation in the context of the development of applied knowledge that will be relevant to the social work profession; as such, the student will develop components of the dissertation that may be published or presented in refereed venues.

Students will:

- Complete an independent dissertation including a publishable, standalone literature review.
- Publish and/or present one component of the dissertation in at least one refereed venue.

SOWK 777 Dissertation II

Over two semesters, students will work in close consultation with a faculty member to build upon the research question crafted in the Dissertation Seminar. They will gain institutional approval to conduct their independent research and will conduct the research under the supervision of the faculty member. A focus will be placed on the completion of a traditional dissertation in the context of the development of applied knowledge that will be relevant to the social work profession; as such, the student will develop components of the dissertation that may be published or presented in refereed venues.

Students will:

- Complete an independent dissertation including a publishable, standalone literature review.
- Publish and/or present one component of the dissertation in at least one refereed venue.

SOCIAL WORK ELECTIVES

Students will complete two electives during the program. These electives will be selected in consultation with their Dissertation Chair and DSW Director. In general, electives should have a direct connection to research/dissertation interests. For the elective to count as credit, it must be at the graduate level and can be taken within the social work program at either University or from another master's or Doctoral level program, **with permission from the MU Dissertation Chair, MU DSW Director, and MU Department Chair.**

Students have three options for completing the required elective courses within the DSW program:

1. Students can enroll in any graduate level elective offered by any graduate program at their home university. Approval by faculty teaching the course may first be necessary.
2. Students can take any graduate level elective offered by any graduate program within the PASSHE system and enroll as a visiting student. Form: [visiting-student-status-form-02-19-15.pdf \(millersville.edu\)](#)
3. Students can take any graduate level elective offered by any graduate program outside the system but must first get it approved by the Graduate Dean from their home university. Form: [Microsoft Word - Transfer of credit.doc \(millersville.edu\)](#)

LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS

Students will experience the curriculum as part of a cohort characterized by cooperative and collaborative learning and mutual support. Students' learning experiences will include online, face-to-face (optional for those who choose to attend the residency in person), and individualized instruction. Classes online will be a combination of synchronous and asynchronous sessions.

Students will experience a program residency period in which they attend class face-to-face once each fall semester in August. These intensive weekends (Friday at 6:00 p.m. through Sunday noon) will function to provide teaching, closure for the previous semester, planning for the current semester, and professional development sessions. In addition, these intensive weekends will provide the opportunity for the program to engage in a complete program assessment and continuous improvement process. The agendas for intensive weekends appear in the table below.

ADVISING, OVERALL TIMELINE, and FORMS

Action	Responsible Person	Time
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Program Director serves as academic advisor	Department Chair and Program Director	July/August of Year 1
Introduction to the program	Program Director	July/August of Year 1
Notification of ongoing residency dates	Program Director	July/August of Year 1
Course registration Completion	Program Director	Mid-August of Year 1 (Then prior to each term)
Dissertation Chair Assignments	Student; Program Director. Department Chair	End of Year 1/Beginning of Year 2
Development of Individualized Academic Plan	Student; Dissertation Chair	Fall of Year 2
Approval of Individualized Academic Plan	Program Director; Department Chair	Fall of Year 2
Academic advisement Meetings	Student, Program Director	Residencies and minimum of once during each session
Develop Praxis Proposal	Student; Dissertation Chair	Before or during Spring/January Residency Year 2
Approve Praxis Proposal	Program Director; Department Chair	Following close of Spring/January Residency Year 2
Comprehensive Paper Development	Student; Dissertation Chair	During Praxis I and Comprehensive Seminar Spring semester Year 2

Dissertation Committee Member Selection	Dissertation Chair in consultation with Program Director and Department Chair	During Comprehensive Seminar
Comprehensive Paper Defense	Student; Dissertation Committee	Summer/May Residency Year 2
Dissertation Proposal Brief Approved (Abstract)	Dissertation Chair. Program Director; Department Chair	Summer/May Residency Year 2
Dissertation Proposal Defense	Student, Dissertation Committee	Fall/August Residency Year 3
Dissertation Defense	Student; Dissertation Committee; Program Director	Spring semester Year 3
Graduation	Student	May Year 3

INTENSIVE WEEKEND RESIDENCY SCHEDULE AGENDAS

Weekend	Year 1 Cohort	Year 2 Cohort	Year 3 Cohort
August	Advising & Program Orientation Instruction of Fall Courses Professional Development	Advising Instruction of Fall Courses Professional development session	Dissertation Proposal Defense Professional Development sessions

MILLERSVILLE UNIVERSITY ACADEMIC POLICIES

Academic Honesty Policy

Honest behavior is an expectation for all students in the Social Work Program. This policy aims to create and maintain an ethical academic atmosphere in keeping with our program's mission. We hope to foster and encourage our students to contribute positively to our learning community, become competent professionals, and practice ethical behaviors regarding academic and professional practice. Your Social Work professors understand and value the concept of intellectual property. We strive to teach students the ethics of responsibly documenting the ideas of others in all formats. To do so, we believe that we must not only teach the ethics and mechanics of documentation but also hold students accountable for the ethical use of the ideas and words of others. Therefore, all professors will provide the instruction and scaffolding necessary for students to use materials ethically. All students are expected to exercise good faith in submitting research-based work and to document accurately regardless of how the information is used (summary, paraphrase, and quotation) or the format used (written, oral, or visual). Plagiarism, in any form, is unethical and unacceptable and may result in a grade of "fail" and/or dismissal from the program as determined by the program directors in conjunction with relevant faculty members.

Academic Honesty Policy: [Governance Manual \(millersville.edu\)](#)

ACCESSIBILITY AND ACCOMMODATION (ADA) PROGRAM | OFFICE OF LEARNING SERVICES

If you have a disability that requires accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act, contact the Office of Learning Services at learning.services@millersville.edu or 717-871-5554.

Graduation Policy: For more information:

<https://www.millersville.edu/about/administration/policies/pdf/academics/academic-policy-graduation.pdf>

Grade Definition

Millersville University Graduate degree students are required to maintain a 3.0 grade-point average. A student who fails to meet the scholarship standards may be dismissed from a graduate degree program. If a student falls below a 3.0 average, he/she will be placed on probation. Failure to raise the grade-point average to a minimum of 3.0 during the next semester the student is enrolled will result in dismissal from graduate studies at Millersville University. Millersville University: [Graduate Grading Policy](#).

Student's Appeal and Grievance Procedures

Students must follow University grievance procedures when filing an appeal: Millersville University: [MILLERSVILLE UNIVERSITY](#)

Credit for Personal and Life Experience

The DSW program recognizes that many students have life and work experiences that give them unique insight into advanced education or leadership. Therefore, the program welcomes student contributions to discussions related to their experiences. However, students should note that doctoral-level social work education requires the ability to build on coursework to develop the skills necessary to teach in higher education, to lead organizations, and to independently complete research toward the theory development and program evaluation needed to further the profession. For this reason, no academic credit will be accepted for professional work or life experience.

Student Conduct and Ethics

Students are responsible for making themselves familiar with the Code of Ethics written by our professional organization, the National Association of Social Workers (NASW). All behavior in the program must meet the standards detailed in the Code. (See *Code of Ethics*, <https://www.socialworkers.org/About/Ethics/Code-of-Ethics>) Further, the MU DSW Program reserves

the right to refuse continued enrollment to any student, who violates the MU Student Code of Conduct and Judicial Affairs as well as the MU School of Social Work Professionalism Policy (see, below for further information related to these policies).

Student Code of Conduct and Judicial Affairs

Social Work Students are expected to adhere to the University Code of Conduct. Violations to this code may also be violations to the NASW Code of Ethics and as such, special consideration and attention is given. For more information, visit the University policy website <https://tinyurl.com/MU-Student-Code-of-Conduct>

Title IX Reporting requirements and the Faculty Member | Millersville University:

*Millersville University and its faculty are committed to assuring a safe and productive educational environment for all students. In order to comply with the requirements of Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 and the University's commitment to offering supportive measures in accordance with the new regulations issued under Title IX, the University requires faculty members to report to the University's Title IX Coordinator incidents of sexual violence shared by students. The only exceptions to the faculty member's reporting obligation are when incidents of sexual violence are communicated by a student during a classroom discussion, in a writing assignment for a class, or as part of a University-approved research project. **Faculty members are obligated to report to the person designated in the University Protection of Minors policy sexual violence or any other abuse of a student who was, or is, a child (a person under 18 years of age) when the abuse allegedly occurred.***

Information regarding the reporting of sexual violence and the resources that are available to victims of sexual violence is set forth at: www.millersville.edu/titleix

University officials and faculty members must continue to ensure that victims of sexual violence know where and with whom complaints of sexual violence may be filed and notified of the counseling and health care services that the University makes available to them so that such matters can be addressed confidentially. Additionally, disclosure of sexual violence against a child (a person under 18 years of age when the incident(s) occurred) is not exempt from the faculty member's Title IX reporting obligations.

For questions about Title IX, please contact Miguel Pereira Title IX Coordinator, at MUTitleIXCoordinator@millersville.edu or 717-871-4100, or the Deputy Title IX Coordinator responsible for complaints involving employees at 717-871-4950.

MILLERSVILLE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF EDUCATION & HUMAN SERVICES PROFESSIONALISM POLICY

Purpose

The purpose of the Professionalism Policy is to promote and assure candidate professionalism aligned to national standards (see Table 1). To that end, this policy defines guidelines for educating candidates about professionalism in their discipline, evaluation of professionalism, establishment of fair process procedures for review of concerns, and for the creation of professional development plans.

Every candidate has the ability to grow and develop. This is true for knowledge and skills as well as for self-awareness, professional habits of thinking, and development of moral commitments. This happens best when candidates truly commit to open-minded and whole-hearted self-reflection, goal setting, and take personal responsibility for improvement. As learning is primarily a social and interactive activity, a candidate's growth and development also requires engaged and committed faculty who provide on-going feedback and assessment to initiate change.

Scope

The Professionalism Policy applies to all programs and candidates of the School of Social Work as well as the Professional Education Unit. It is intended to support candidate professional development and program quality. This document will use the terms “candidates” and “programs” in referring to all these groups.

Terms Used in the Professionalism Policy

- Professional Performance: Demonstrations of professional knowledge, skills, and professional behavior in field-based assignments, tasks, activities, and assessments. These include, but are not limited to, culminating clinical practices such as student teaching, practicum, or internship.
- Professional Behavior: Behaviors critical to the profession such as appropriate communication that are demonstrated in all aspects of a candidate’s program (field experience, courses, interactions outside of courses).
- Professional Dispositions: The habits of thinking and moral commitments reflected in candidate's patterns of professional performance and behavior.
- Professional Ethics: The norms and principles of appropriate conduct that guide decision-making, and help professionals monitor their own behavior, for the purpose of protecting individuals in their care as well as the general public, mitigating risk to the professional, and to the reputation of the profession.
- Laws and Millersville Policies: Millersville University policies such as academic honesty, Title IX, and legal infractions may also relate to professionalism issues, but generally go beyond the scope of this policy and are covered by other university and legal procedures. Policies regarding infractions on a candidate’s clearances are described in the Field Course Clearance Policy.
- Formal Admission: A benchmark in each program in which a student advances to upper-level course work and field experiences (e.g., APS for teacher candidates, degree candidacy for advanced programs).

Informing and Educating Candidates about the Professionalism Policy

Each program will designate a course or procedure early in the program where the Professionalism Policy will be presented and explained. Candidates will complete a form indicating that they have received and read the policy. Candidates should also be given access to officially approved evaluation instruments (Table 1) referred to in the Professionalism Policy on the College of Education and Human Services website. The process should provide the same access to information and documentation for all candidates including transfer students.

Evaluation Instruments and Their Uses

- All candidates will self-evaluate, set goals, and reflect on their own professional qualities early in their program, prior to formal admission and at least one other time as set and communicated by their program. Candidate self-evaluation is used to help promote self-awareness, responsibility, and accountability of one’s professional development. Self-evaluations may be used as a component of professional planning and advisement. Candidate self-evaluation will not be used for decision-making regarding progress through the program. Candidate self-evaluation is only used to help candidates take ownership over their professional development.
- Candidates in field experiences will be evaluated for professional performance related to the experience using instruments approved through the appropriate curriculum / policy group for that program (Table 2). An important purpose of evaluation is feedback to candidates so that they can set goals and improve. Identification of significant concerns related to professional performance is described below.

Appropriate codes of Ethics for each profession will be identified by the appropriate curriculum/policy group for that program. All candidates will be evaluated on their knowledge of the expectations of the profession, including codes of ethics, professional standards of performance, and relevant laws and policies. Before any candidate is recommended for licensure or certification, programs must document

that the candidate understands the expectations of the profession, including codes of ethics, professional standards of practice, and relevant laws and policies.

- All candidates will be assessed by faculty using the disposition and professional behavior rubric approved by the appropriate curriculum / policy group for that program as a requirement for formal admission (Table 3) and at least one other time as set and communicated by their program. Evaluation of dispositions is used primarily for candidate self-reflection and growth. Disposition evaluation may be used to counsel candidates about career choices. They are used for decisions about candidate progression through a program if they are also related to professional behavior and / or professional performance.

Identification of Concerns and Possible Formal Review

All candidates are developing as professionals and are expected to have specific needs for professional performance growth. Faculty should help candidates succeed and address most needs with informal mentoring and support. However, if concerns persist after informal guidance and support, there are three ways that a concern can be identified as possibly needing further review:

1. If a field-based partner or university supervisor or university liaison identifies professionalism concerns in the field and if the program leader (Table 4) thinks a formal review process is needed, then a formal process is initiated. If the candidate has been removed by the field partner and the program leader determines that a formal process is not needed, then a new placement will be found as soon as possible.
2. If a member of the Millersville University community identifies professionalism concerns for a candidate, these concerns should be brought to the program leader or designee. Concerns can be brought using technology notifications, direct communication with the program leader, or as part of faculty group meetings. If the program leader determines a formal review is needed, then a formal review is initiated.
3. If a candidate receives a “not recommend,” “unsatisfactory,” or “below proficient” rating at a transition point based on an evaluation of professional behaviors and dispositions, then a formal review process is automatically required.
4. If a program leader decides not to start a formal process or fails to act and a faculty member or other stakeholder believes a formal process is needed – the faculty member may appeal the decision to the Dean of the College of Education and Human Services or their designee. The Dean or designee should attempt to consult with the program leader and then initiate a formal review if needed.

Formal Review Related to Concerns

1. Formal review will take place in a meeting including relevant faculty selected by the program leader. In cases involving field experience, the person responsible for field placements for that program must be invited to participate.
2. Formal review for field based professional performance or for professional behaviors or dispositions may only be completed using evaluation instruments approved by the appropriate curriculum / policy group for that program. These guidelines will be revised to include new instruments as they are approved. All approved instruments must be consistent with and reflect recognized state or national professional standards appropriate for program. Clinical partners and faculty should be involved in the development and validation of these instruments.
3. Candidates must be notified in advance of the purpose of the meeting and the fact that it could result in an unsatisfactory review. Candidates should be made aware that they will have a right to appeal the results of the review and that they may bring advocates and relevant evidence to the meeting. There should be no decisions or plans drafted before the meeting.
4. If the meeting results in an unsatisfactory review, a Professional Development Plan will be created. Professional Development Plans should specify current deficiencies, goals, potential consequences for failure to meet goals, identification of point-in-time when goal achievement will be assessed, and rights of appeal in case of failure to meet goals of plan.

5. If the review finds that the candidate's behavior is such that participation in any field placements would pose a risk to the safety of individuals in that field placement, and the candidate would like to continue in his/her program, the findings of the formal review, along with any written statement by the candidate, will be shared with any current or prospective field placements. As with clearance infractions, field partners hold their own standards for accepting candidates and Millersville has no control over their decisions. In the event that a field partner denies a candidate a placement, Millersville will search for another placement opportunity twice more, for a total of three (3) attempts. If three partners refuse or deny working with the candidate in question, Millersville University then resigns all responsibility in making a field placement for the candidate during his/her enrolled semester. Candidates will not be able to complete their degree program and/or certification program if they cannot complete required field experiences.
6. Faculty assess whether the goals of the Professional Development Plan have been met as well as specific consequences for progression through their program and will inform candidates of their right to appeal.

Appeals Process

1. Candidates have a right to appeal decisions from the formal review process. The first appeal is to the Professionalism Appeals Committee. Candidates initiating an appeal may bring advocates. Appeal decisions are made by a majority of the committee members voting. Appeals Committee members involved in the development or review of a Professional Development Plan should recuse themselves from voting. Faculty and field-based partners involved in the initial formal review should be invited to explain their decisions.
This committee should include one representative from each department/school in the College of Education and Human Services, and one member from outside the College. The chair of the committee will be selected from among the committee members.
Members should serve two-year terms and efforts should be made to rotate representation of the non-College of Education and Human Services representatives between different Professionalism Education Unit (PEU) departments. Members of the Professionalism Appeals Committee are collaboratively selected by the Dean of the College of Education and Human Services and the department/school chairs.
2. Final appeal is to the Dean of the College of Education and Human Services.

Students and Concerns

Student Support

At times, it may become necessary for the faculty to counsel or dismiss a student who does not satisfy academic standards of performance, conduct, communication skills, professional use of self and emotional self-management. Since these areas are related to professional behavior, they are considered academic concerns. The faculty is committed to supporting students who face any challenge to their academic success. Consequently, it might be necessary to implement a Professional Development Plan and a formal Professionalism Review meeting may be requested when students themselves, faculty, and/or dissertation chairs recognize a student in difficulties.

MU Zoom Netiquette

- In your use of Zoom, please observe Netiquette (Internet etiquette). Your class facilitator will oversee the implementation of proper conduct. According to Quality Matters (QM Maryland online), all users should maintain "civilized, professional, and effective communication in the online environment."
- *Remember to:*

- Use standard English in written communication.
- Keep your questions and comments relevant to the discussion topic. If another participant posts a comment or question that is off topic, do not reply. The Facilitator will reply in private to the participant.
- Treat the other participants in the forum in a polite and respectful manner.
- Model the same standards of behavior online you would follow in a face-to-face discussion. Do not use ALL CAPS when posting as this is considered "shouting."
- Do not "flame" others in forums. Flaming is the "act of responding in a highly critical, sarcastic, or ridiculing manner."
- *Recommendations offered by Zoom include:*
- *Mute your microphone when necessary.*
- Zoom has a "Mute Microphone" option that cuts down on ambient feedback noise. When you are speaking to the group, you will Unmute. When you are listening, it is better to Mute to prevent transmitting background noise (e.g., you are sneezing, shuffling papers, etc.) to others.
- *Use Zoom's chat function.*
- You can send a question or statement to everyone or privately to a participant.
- *Think about your actions on camera.*
- Always remember that everyone can see you. Obvious eating/drinking, yawning, stretching, wandering on camera is not recommended. These can be distracting to the audience and disruptive to the speaker.



Comprehensive Paper and Dissertation Guidelines

Doctor of Social Work
TRANSFORMATIVE LEADERSHIP
MILLERSVILLE UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

COMPREHENSIVE PAPER, ELECTIVES, DISSERTATION PROPOSAL, & DISSERTATION: THE
FINAL 24 CREDITS

After the first 8 DSW courses (24 credits) are completed, the remaining 24 credits emphasize the interface of the Leadership/Teaching Praxis courses, Comprehensive paper, chosen electives, and

Dissertation. The spring Praxis theoretical course should contribute to the writing of the theoretical framework to be used to inform the dissertation and incorporated into the spring Comprehensive paper and its defense in May; the successfully defended Comprehensive paper should serve as the segue to the Dissertation proposal research, writing, and defense. The culmination is the successful defense of the final Dissertation, Graduation, and earning the Doctor of Social Work degree. The sections that follow will provide a review of the Comprehensive paper, electives, Dissertation proposal, and final Dissertation.

Electives and the Dissertation. As noted earlier in this Handbook, you will have two electives to complete. It is important that the electives are chosen with the understanding that they will contribute to the content and completion of the dissertation. Consult with the Dissertation Chair and DSW Director.

Students have three options for completing the required elective courses within the DSW program:

1. Students can enroll in any graduate level elective offered by any graduate program at their home university.
2. Students can take any graduate level elective offered by any graduate program within the PASSHE system and enroll as a visiting student.
3. Students can take any graduate level elective offered by any graduate program outside the system but must first get it approved by the Graduate Dean from their home university.

Comprehensive Paper

Purpose

The Comprehensive Paper is the basis for assessing whether doctoral students have acquired the knowledge and skills necessary for proceeding with the development of a Doctoral Dissertation. Utilizing a phenomenon of interest, students will demonstrate their ability to conceptualize a clear and compelling research topic by organizing, presenting, and critiquing theoretically and empirically based knowledge related to the phenomenon. Further, students will identify areas needing further exploration and research methods to conduct the proposed research.

The Comprehensive Paper should:

- demonstrate that the student has acquired a sufficiently broad understanding of the phenomenon of interest, and
- indicate that the student is prepared to add to knowledge in the field through an in-depth study of a topic relevant to the practice of social work.

Requirements

Students will be informed of the requirements and process for completing the Comprehensive Paper during the Spring Residency of the program's second year. The comprehensive paper should be at least 50 double-spaced, typewritten pages, excluding references, title page, and table of contents. The Comprehensive Paper must adhere to all APA (7th ed.) guidelines and conventions.

Deadlines

1. Students will submit feedback to each group member's section one week before the section is due. The grading rubric included as Appendix A of this syllabus will be used for peer feedback and instructor grading.
2. The four major sections of the Comprehensive Paper will be submitted as separate assignments throughout the semester. All students should submit their papers in SOWK 774: Comprehensive

Seminar D2L Course Shell, using the *My Assignments* section. After submission, students will be able to view a Turnitin originality report for their paper.

3. Students will submit their Final Comprehensive Paper **by 11:59PM on the first Friday in May.**
4. During the Summer Residency, students will provide an oral defense of their Comprehensive Paper to their Dissertation Chair and committee member(s) that highlights an overview of the phenomenon, the research question the student will explore in dissertation, and possible methodology to employ. Students will receive immediate oral feedback after the oral defense and the graded rubric.

Defense

Using the grading rubric, students will receive feedback from the committee who reads and hears their defense. Students will either “Pass,” “Pass with Revisions,” or “Not Pass” the Preliminary Paper. Students must receive a grade of “Pass” or “Pass with Revisions” to enter the dissertation phase of the program (Fall Semester of the Third Year). If students do not pass the Preliminary Paper, they will receive feedback on what remedial work is required, which must be addressed and completed by the end of the summer before the Fall Semester of the Third Year. The original committee will review the remedial work and determine, in consultation with the Program Director, whether the student can proceed to the dissertation phase. Once the student passes the preliminary paper defense and have met all requirements but the dissertation in the DSW program and have entered candidacy (ABD).

Comprehensive Paper Outline

Title Page

- Descriptive title no longer than 12 words
- Author, institutional affiliation, date
- Key words

Introduction Section (this is an overview of the phenomenon; phenomenon = the social work problem)

- Clear statement of purpose for the exploration of the topic area
- Description of focal problem, including scope and magnitude
- Description and justification of study purpose and rationale (study purpose)
- Description of importance/relevance for social work (practice, education, policy)

Theoretical Framework(s)

- Succinct overview of the constructs of theory/ies that inform the problem per relevance to social work.

Literature Review

- Selection process of identifying and selecting relevant literature, including databases
- Assessment of scope, relevance, and methodological quality of literature reviewed.
- Review and synthesis of major findings concerning the phenomenon of interest, including what is known, what is not known, and what needs to be known.
- Discussion of major conclusions based upon the preceding elements.

Implications and Conclusions

- Summary of implications for social work practice across levels (micro, mezzo, and/or macro) and systems (individual, family, groups, organizations, and/or community).

- Brief statement of contributions the proposed dissertation study will make to the literature as related to social work education and/or leadership.
- Identification of two distinct research questions (or distinct sets of research questions) and an overview of a methodology to address each (2-3 paragraphs)
- One of the two research questions should lead to a primarily qualitative study and the other to a primarily quantitative study.

References (not counted toward page limit; absolute adherence to APA (7th Ed.)

Assessment

Using the grading rubric, students will receive feedback from the committee who reads and hears their defense. Students will either “Pass,” “Pass with Revisions,” or “Not Pass” the Comprehensive Paper. Students must receive a grade of “Pass” or “Pass with Revisions” to enter the dissertation phase of the program (Fall Semester of the Third Year). If students do not pass the Comprehensive Paper, they will receive feedback on what remedial work is required, which must be addressed and completed by the end of the summer before the Fall Semester of the Third Year. The original committee will review the remedial work and decide or determine, in consultation with Program Co-Directors, whether the student is able to proceed to the dissertation phase. If the student passes the comprehensive paper, having completed 30 credits, he/she has met all requirements but the dissertation in the DSW program and has entered candidacy (ABD designation, meaning All but Dissertation). **See the comprehensive paper Rubric Appendix A and Rating form Appendix B.**

DISSERTATION PROPOSAL & DISSERTATION

Definition of a Dissertation

To achieve your doctoral degree, you are required to complete the research, theory, experimentation, and writing of your dissertation. A dissertation is a technical endeavor that documents and sets forth support for your original thesis. Dissertations should be complete and written for academic audiences.

Writing your dissertation will require you to use the scientific method. The scientific method means you will begin with a problem statement, move to a research question, and proceed with an empirical study of the phenomenon at hand. Most of the doctoral dissertation writing process is collecting and organizing the pieces of evidence you collect into an orderly and presentable form. The essence of a dissertation is demonstrating critical thinking skills, not presenting experimental data.

Analyzing research, presenting concepts, and stating all lessons learned, not just the facts, is the application of the dissertation. Each statement within your dissertation should be supported by a reference to published scientific literature, or by your own original work. However, a dissertation should not repeat the details of the published sources' critical thinking and analysis; it should instead use the published work's results as demonstrable and refer readers to it as a source for additional detail.

Important Note: The Comprehensive Paper content is used to frame the first chapters of the Dissertation Proposal, and the Dissertation Proposal will guide the collection of data and composition of the final Dissertation. The Dissertation Proposal will be defended at the program's August/Fall Residency of Year 3.

Dissertation Roles & Responsibilities

Student (ABD Candidate) The doctoral student has the primary responsibility for the dissertation from the creation of the subject matter to the preparation of the final defense. The student is responsible for ensuring that the dissertation manuscript meets accepted standards for scholarly writing and has thoroughly proofread the documents for accuracy including spelling, punctuation, and grammar. The student also should become familiar with the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, 7th edition, the required academic style manual. The student should also follow the dissertation outline and formatting that follow. Remember to allow the reader (e.g., the Dissertation Chair) at least 14 days (about 2 weeks) to read drafts.

Dissertation Committee Chair. The dissertation committee chair, who must be a member of the MU DSW faculty, accepts and assumes the major responsibility to work directly with the graduate student in the research. The dissertation committee chair will work closely with the student in all aspects of the dissertation experience, including the development of the research proposal, the implementation of the research design, the analysis of the data or supporting evidence, and the writing of the dissertation. The dissertation committee chair is responsible for editing the dissertation for accuracy in content and format. Prior to the submission of the dissertation to the dissertation committee, it is the responsibility of the dissertation committee chair to review the document and ensure that it is of high quality in content and literary style before forwarding it to others.

DSW Program Director. The MU DSW Program Director monitors dissertation progress and ensures that the student is making acceptable progress on the dissertation in a timely manner for the student's intended graduation.

Graduate Studies the Millersville University Graduate Studies program oversees and implements all policies and procedures governing graduate dissertations. It publicizes and disseminates the articulation of these policies to the graduate community.

Dissertation Grading Policy

Dissertations are evaluated by the student's committee and a grade is entered by the committee chair based on P (Pass), F (Fail), or I (Incomplete).

Role of "Theory"

Theory/Conceptualization

Students will be expected to incorporate theory on, or linkages to, transformative leadership in the research. Theory is often defined as a systematic explanation for a set of facts. However, note that in social work research, research may also be driven by:

- conceptualization in the form of a well-developed conceptual framework
- accumulated practice wisdom
- deductive reasoning using scientific method.
- framework
- hypothesis
- Model
- perspective
- proposition
- school of thought
- set of principles
- values of social work Code of Ethics (NASW, 2017)

Choosing a Topic and Committee

In consultation with the DSW Program Director and approval by the Department Chair, the student is responsible for selecting a topic. Some things you can consider when choosing a dissertation topic:

1. Begin by exploring topics that match your interests, knowledge, and skills, and that relate to the DSW themes of teaching and/or leadership.
2. Consider what is happening in your professional field. New innovations can be explored further.
3. Choose a topic that will keep you engaged, one that interests you long term.
4. Discuss your dissertation ideas with faculty members interested in your selected topic. You may explore topics with several faculty members before selecting your final topic.
5. Work with your Dissertation Chair to form a committee. Normally, you will benefit from having these roles met: familiarity with the topic, familiarity with the methodology, and the ability to oversee and help you manage the process from start to finish.

MU DSW DISSERTATION TIMELINE

Deadlines and timeline may vary depending on your topic and your committee chair. This timeline is intended as a general guideline. Note that throughout the process, edits should be submitted properly and timely. Allow readers two weeks 'notice and Dissertation Chair should make all edits before sending to committee members. Dissertation Chair and student must communicate regularly and with clarity.

Timeline for Dissertation

When	Coordinating experience	What
Spring of Year 2	Praxis I; Comprehensive Seminar. Plan electives	The Comprehensive Paper (written during the spring term of year 2) is considered a qualifying benchmark in progression to ABD (all but dissertation) status. Typically, the Praxis experience is related to the Comprehensive Paper. You will receive guidance from the Research Advisor/Dissertation Chair. Plan how you will fulfill the two electives: Year 2 summer and Year 3 fall; Year 3 fall and spring; or two in one term. The electives should support the dissertation.
May of Year 2		Submit Comprehensive Paper to the MU DSW D2L Assignment folder and to the Dissertation Chair no later than midnight of the first Friday in May. In consultation with Dissertation Chair (who consults with Program Director and Chair), we plan to identify two committee members.
May Residency, Year 2		Defend Comprehensive Paper at May Residency. The Dissertation Chair and at least one other faculty member (committee member, DSW Program Director, or other faculty) will attend. Dissertation Chair will submit results to DSW Program Director.

Summer of Year 2	Dissertation Seminar	In consultation with the Dissertation Chair, develop the Comprehensive Paper into a Dissertation Proposal and prepare to submit proposal to IRB. Submit Dissertation Request Registration Form to DSW Director. [Ensure plan for completion of elective(s) in support of dissertation.]
August Residency, Year 2		Defend Dissertation Proposal at August Residency (Dissertation Chair and committee attend). Submit DSW Dissertation Proposal Approval form to DSW Program Director.
Fall of Year 3	Dissertation I	If not already approved, submit the IRB proposal. Conduct the research. [Ensure plan for completion of elective(s) in support of dissertation.]
Spring of Year 3	Dissertation II	Continue research and writing. Consult with Dissertation Chair to plan completion. Apply for graduation. [Ensure plan for completion of elective(s) in support of dissertation.]
No later than mid-April Year 3	Dissertation II	Schedule, send invitations, and hold the Dissertation Defense (with Dissertation Chair and committee); see Defense guidelines. Complete revisions. Submit the Dissertation Defense Report to DSW Director. Refer to the Dissertation checklist.
By end of April Year 3	Dissertation II	Submit the revised, final version of the dissertation to your Dissertation Chair for review. Submit the Doctor of Social Work Dissertation Submission form to DSW Director. Follow MU Dissertation Policies to submit the final pdf copy of dissertation for publication.
May of Year 3		Dissertation grades will be submitted by Dissertation Chair.
May		Attend the Commencement Ceremony.

DISSERTATION OUTLINE, DEFENSE, FORMATTING, FORMS, & SUBMISSION

MU DSW Checklist for Dissertation

- ✓ During the summer enrolled in Dissertation Seminar, Submit **Dissertation Request Registration Form** to Dissertation Chair, who submits to DSW Director. The Dean of Graduate Studies is the final signature and forwards the form to the Registrar.
- ✓ After successful Dissertation Proposal defense, submit signed **Dissertation Proposal Approval Form** to DSW Director who will forward to Graduate Studies.

All committee members must be assigned and listed before submission.

- ✓ Apply **for Graduation** by the appropriate deadline.
- ✓ **Dissertation Defense Report** is completed by the committee chair after the defense and submitted to DSW Director who will forward to Graduate Studies. The chair submits the final grade.
- ✓ Submit an electronic copy of **the final document** in PDF format along with **Doctor of Social Work Dissertation Submission Form**.
- ✓ Submit an electronic copy of **the final document** in PDF format to Research Commons.
- ✓ Be sure your committee **chair has submitted a grade** for dissertation credits.
- ✓ Copyright permission letter(s) from copyright owner(s) must be included **if copyrighted material is used** outside of the guidelines of fair use.
- ✓ A letter from the owner of the software license granting permission to use their software must be attached **if executable software owned by another party** is used in the thesis.
- ✓ Required pages are in proper order.

MU DSW DISSERTATION OUTLINE

[Adapted from these resources]

Bloomberg, L.D., & Volpe, M. (2018). *Completing your qualitative dissertation: A road map* (4th ed.). Sage.

Krathwohl, D., & Smith, N. (2005). *How to prepare a dissertation proposal: Suggestions for students in education & the social and behavioral sciences*. Syracuse University Press.]

ORDER OF ELEMENTS

Title Page

Approval Page (see MU Handbook)

Copyright page (optional)

Abstract (see MU Handbook)

Dedication (optional) Acknowledgments

Table of Contents List of

tables and figures

Chapter 1 Introduction

Chapter 2 Literature review

Chapter 3 Methodology and Research Approach Chapter 4 Findings

Chapter 4 Analysis and Synthesis

Chapter 5 Conclusions and Recommendations

References

Footnotes

Tables

Figures

Appendices

Overview

The following is a map that briefly outlines the contents of an entire dissertation. This is a comprehensive overview and as such is helpful in making sure that at a glance you understand up front the necessary elements that will constitute each section of your dissertation. Reasons for inclusion, quality markers, and frequent errors are included for each element of the dissertation.

Front Matter

- ✓ Title page
- ✓ Copyright page (optional; copyrights are automatic; formal copyright requires a fee)
- ✓ Abstract
- ✓ Dedication
- ✓ Acknowledgments
- ✓ Table of contents
- ✓ List of table and figures (only those in chapters, not those in appendices)

Title Page

The title gives a clear and concise description of the topic and/or problems and the scope of the study. The title page will show the title; the author's full name; the degree to be conferred; the university, department, and college in which the degree is earned; and the month and year of approval. Margins for the title page and the entire document are left—1.5 inches; right, top, and bottom—1 inch. Also, the title should be in all capitals.

Students often labor over producing a dissertation title at the early stages of dissertation work. It is a good idea to create what is, in effect, a "working title" as you think about your topic and hone your problem and to refine this title as your study proceeds. A title captures the major thrust of your research. A working title becomes a guiding focus as you move through your study. Keeping notes or journaling about how and why your title changes over time is a useful exercise because it tracks developments in your thinking as your study progresses.

Reason

The title both guides and reflects the purpose and content of the study, making its relevance apparent to prospective readers. The title is also important for retrieval purposes, enabling other researchers to locate it through a literature search.

Quality Markers

A well-crafted title conveys the essence and purpose of the study. The title should include the type of study ("An Analysis") and the participants. Use of keywords will promote proper categorization into databases such as ERIC (the Education Resources Information Center) and Dissertation Abstracts International.

Frequent Errors

Frequent title errors include the use of trendy, elaborate, nonspecific, or literary language, and grandiose or unrealistic expectations (e.g., "Finally, a Solution to . . .")

Copyright Page (optional)

Copyright is the legal right of an owner of created material to control copying and ownership of that material. Authors of research documents who wish to protect their writing through copyright may do so. A student may file a claim to copyright by corresponding directly with the U.S. Copyright Office (Library of Congress, 101 Independence Avenue S.E., Washington, DC 20559-6000).

The copyright symbol (©) should appear with author's name and year centered between the margins on the lower half of the backside of the title page. Below the copyright line, includes the statement "All Rights Reserved."

Abstract

The abstract, limited to 350 words, is a concise summary description of the study, including statement of the problem, purpose, scope, research tradition, data sources, methodology, key findings, and implications. The abstract is written after the dissertation is completed and is written from the perspective of an outside reader (i.e., not "My dissertation examines" but "An examination of . . .").

The page numbers before the text are in Roman numerals. The abstract page is the first page to be numbered, but as iii. All Roman numerals should be centered between the left and right margins, and 1 inch from the bottom of the page. The title of the page, "ABSTRACT," should be in all capitals and centered between the left and right margins, and 2 inches from the top.

Reason

The abstract's inclusion in Dissertation Abstracts International (which mandates a 350-word limit) makes it possible for other researchers to determine the relevance of this work to their own studies. Over 95% of American dissertations are included in Dissertation Abstracts International.

Quality Markers

Marks of quality include conciseness and accuracy. The abstract should also be written in the third person (active voice without the personal pronouns *I* and *we*). The first sentence of an abstract describes the entire study; subsequent sentences expound on that description.

Frequent Errors

Inclusion of irrelevant material (i.e., examples, information extraneous to the dissertation itself), exclusion of necessary material (i.e., problem, purpose, scope, research tradition, data sources, methodology, key findings, and implications), and incorrect format are frequent abstract errors.

Dedication and Acknowledgments

These pages are optional, although most dissertations include a brief acknowledgment of the contributions of committee members, colleagues, friends, and family members who have supported the students' research. "ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS" should be capitalized and should appear centered between the left and right margins, 2 inches from the top. Text should begin with two-line spaces after "ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS."

The dedication page is separate from the acknowledgments page. If included, the dedication text should be centered between the left and right margins and between the top and bottom margins; it should also reflect a professional nature.

Table of Contents

An outline of the entire dissertation, listing headings and subheadings with their respective page numbers, the table of contents lists all chapters and major sections within chapters and all back matter with page numbers.

The heading "TABLE OF CONTENTS" is centered between the left and right margins, 2 inches from the top of the page. The listing begins with one double space below and even with the left margin. Leader dots are placed from the end of each listing to the corresponding page number. All major titles are typed exactly as they appear in the text. When a title or subtitle exceeds one line, the second and succeeding lines are single-spaced and indented two spaces. Double spacing is used between major titles and between each major title and its subtitle. The table of contents may be followed by any of the following, if needed, and any of these subsequent lists are formatted in the same manner as the table of contents.

Reason

-Column Break.....List of tables
- List of figures
- List of illustrations

The table of contents assists the researcher in organizing the material while promoting accessibility for the reader.

Quality Markers

The headings and subheadings clearly and concisely reflect the material being presented.

Headings and subheadings are parallel grammatically (i.e., "Introduction," "Review of Literature"). The headings and subheadings in the table of contents are worded the same as those headings and subheadings in the text.

Frequent Errors

Frequent errors include lack of parallelism in headings and subheadings, as well as wording in the table of contents that does not match wording in text.

Dissertation Chapters

The order and format of dissertation chapters may vary by institution and department.

1. Introduction
2. Literature review
3. Methodology and Research Approach
4. Findings
5. Analysis, Interpretation, and Synthesis
6. Conclusions and recommendations

Dissertation Chapter 1: Introduction

This section makes a case for the significance of the problem, contextualizes the study, introduces its basic components, and outlines the theoretical or conceptual framework of the study. It should be informative and able to stand alone as a document.

- ✓ **Introduction:** The introduction includes an overview of the purpose and focus of the study, why it is significant, how it was conducted, and how it will contribute to professional knowledge and practice.
- ✓ **Problem statement:** The problem indicates the need for the study, describes the issue or problem to be studied, and situates it in a broader social context.
- ✓ **Statement of purpose:** *Describing the research purpose logically, it is the major objective or intent of the study; it enables the reader to understand the research's central thrust.* Once the problem is clearly stated, the purpose will then need to evolve to align with the problem. One way of assuring is to have one—and only one—wording for the purpose. Once you settle on the wording, use the exact wording throughout whenever you present the purpose.
- ✓ **Research questions:** Research questions are directly tied to the purpose. They should be specific, unambiguously stated, and open-ended. These questions cue readers to the direction the study will take and help delineate its scope. In qualitative studies, research questions are developed at the start of a project and become modified as the research process proceeds to address emergent issues. It is therefore important that the researcher remains responsive to the phenomena and contexts of the study so that the research questions may and often do evolve over time. For quantitative research questions, state the hypothesis and null hypothesis.
- ✓ **Overview of research design:** This section outlines the research approach, the research methodology, research setting, population and sample, instrumentation (data collection tools, as relevant), and method of data collection and analysis.
- ✓ **Rationale and significance:** Rationale is the justification for the study presented as a logical argument. Significance addresses the benefits that may be derived from doing the study, thereby reaffirming the research purpose.
- ✓ **Role of the researcher:** This section explains the role of the researcher in planning and conducting the study, with reference to the researcher's reflexive stance so that all potential subjectivities are addressed. Any relevant prior experience that may impact or enhance the study is addressed.
- ✓ **Researcher assumptions:** This section makes explicit relevant researcher assumptions, beliefs, and biases (as applicable), which may impact the research process or the actual study. Assumptions are those ideas that you believe to be true but do not have evidence to support.
- ✓ **Definition of key terminology:** Some terms may be unfamiliar to readers. Additionally, the meanings of certain terms can vary depending on the context, conceptual framework, or field of study. Making terms explicit adds precision and ensures clarity of understanding. These terms should be operationally defined or explained; that is, be sure to make clear how these terms are used in *your* study.
- ✓ **Theoretical or conceptual framework:** The conceptual framework draws on theory, research, and experience, and examines the relationship among constructs and ideas. As such, it is the structure or heuristic that guides your research. The conceptual framework provides the theoretical and methodological bases for development of the study and analysis of findings. When appropriate, a graphic depiction of the model is included, showing the relationships between concepts, ideas, or variables to be studied.
- ✓ **Organization of the dissertation:** This brief concluding explanation delineates the contents of the remaining chapters in the dissertation so that the reader has an idea of what to expect.

Reason

The introduction sets the stage for the study and directs readers to the purpose and context of the dissertation. The theoretical or conceptual framework guides the research and plays a major role in analysis of findings.

Quality Markers

A quality introduction situates the context and scope of the study and informs the reader of all components of the study. Discussion is concise and precise, and all choices are logically explained. All key elements are aligned, including problem, purpose, research questions, and the rationale for research design, methodology, and methods. The role and function of the theoretical or conceptual framework are clear: The framework clearly draws on theory, research, and/or experience, providing theoretical or conceptual coherence to the research. Alignment among the framework and the study's problem, purpose, and research questions is clear.

Frequent Errors

Errors occur when the introduction does not clearly reflect the study's components and/or the relationship of methodological choices to the proposed research problem and purpose. Presentation of a diagrammatic theoretical or conceptual framework with no accompanying narrative explanation.

Dissertation Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter situates the study in the context of previous research and scholarly material pertaining to the topic, presents a critical synthesis of empirical literature according to relevant themes or variables, and justifies how the study addresses a gap or problem in the literature. A dissertation does not merely restate the available knowledge base of a particular topic but adds to or augments it.

- ✓ **Introduction:** *The introduction describes the review's content, scope, and organization and the strategies used in the literature search.*
- ✓ **Review of literature:**

This section accomplishes the following:

- is clearly related to the problem statement, purpose, and research questions.
- states up front the bodies of literature that will be covered, and why.
- reviews primary sources that are mostly recent empirical studies from scholarly journals and publications, as well as secondary sources.
- is logically organized by theme or subtopic, from broad to narrow.
- synthesizes findings across studies and compares different research outcomes, perspectives, or methods.
- notes gaps, debates, or shortcomings in the literature and provides a rationale for the study; and --provides section summaries.

- ✓ **Summary:** A comprehensive synthesis of the literature review should complete this section. This synthesis serves to integrate key themes and issues emanating from the review.

Reason

This chapter provides a strong theoretical or conceptual basis for the dissertation by analyzing and synthesizing a comprehensive selection of appropriate related bodies of literature. The review of literature should build a logical framework for the research, justify the

study by conceptualizing gaps in the literature, and demonstrate how the study will contribute to existing knowledge. The review sits the dissertation within the context of ongoing conversations in the field.

Quality Markers

A comprehensive and thoughtful selection of resources (scholarly peer-reviewed literature) directly related to the study's purpose and background, not the full scope of the field, is considered a mark of a quality literature review. All relevant primary sources and empirical research studies are cited (these are preferable to secondary sources, which are interpretation of the work of others). The writer adopts a critical perspective in discussing the work of others and provides a clear analysis of all available related research. Relevant literature is critiqued, not duplicated, and there is a clear connection between the purpose of this study and the resources included. In addition, there is evidence of the correct use of American Psychological Association (APA, 7th edition) format, citations, and references throughout

Frequent Errors

Frequent errors include insubstantial depth of review (i.e., insufficient number or range of resources; failure to include relevant primary sources) and insubstantial depth use of review (i.e., use of non-scholarly or non-peer-reviewed material; inability to demonstrate clear understanding of resources). Another error is that the review reads more like a catalog of sources than a synthesis and integration of relevant literature. There is also a tendency to eliminate literature that contradicts or questions the findings of the dissertation's study. Other errors include incorrect or insufficient citation of sources, resulting in accidental plagiarism.

Dissertation Chapter 3: Methodology and Research Approach

This chapter situates the study within a particular methodology and provides a rationale for that approach and methodology. The chapter provides a detail of all aspects of the study's design and procedures, including the research setting, population, and sample, and describes all relevant data collection and analysis methods used.

- ✓ **Introduction:** The introduction restates the research purpose and describes the organization of the chapter.
- ✓ **Variables:** Identify and conceptualize or operationalize variables.
- ✓ **Rationale for research design:** This section describes the research approach and the research methodology with a rationale for their suitability regarding addressing the research questions and citing appropriate methodological literature.
- ✓ **Research setting and/or context:** This section describes and justifies selection of the research setting, thereby providing the history, background, and issues germane to the problem.
- ✓ **Research population, sample, and data sources:** This section addresses the following:
 - explains and justifies the sample used and how participants were selected (including target population and sampling procedures).
 - describes the characteristics and size of the sample and provides other pertinent demographic information; and outlines ethical considerations pertaining to participants, shedding light on how rights of participants were protected, with reference to conventions of research ethics and the IRB (institutional review board) process.
- ✓ **Data collection methods:** This section describes and justifies all data collection methods,

tools, instruments, and procedures, including how, when, where, and by whom data was collected.

- ✓ **Data analysis methods:** This section describes and justifies all methods and tools used for analysis of data (manual and/or computational).
- ✓ **Issues of trustworthiness:** This section discusses measures taken to enhance the trustworthiness of the study, including credibility (validity) and dependability (reliability), confirmability, and transferability.
- ✓ **Limitations and delimitations:** This section identifies potential weaknesses of the study and the scope of the study, that is, the external conditions that restrict or constrain the study's scope or potential outcome. Limitations are external conditions that restrict or constrain the study's scope or may affect its outcome. Limitations represent the inherent weaknesses or flaws given the research design. Qualitative limitations are threats to transferability, credibility, confirmability, and dependability. Quantitative limitations are threats to generalizability (external validity), internal validity, reliability. Delimitations are those conditions or parameters that the researcher intentionally imposes to limit the scope of a study (e.g., using participants of certain ages, genders, or groups; conducting the research in a single setting)—that is, the boundaries set by the researcher, often to increase the feasibility of the study.
- ✓ **Summary:** A comprehensive summary overview covers all the sections of this chapter, recapping and highlighting all the important aspects of the study's methodology. Discussion is concise, precise, and understandable. Remember, you do not want to lose the reader.

Reason

The study is the basis for the conclusions and recommendations. In many ways, it is what makes the difference between a dissertation and other forms of extended writing. A clear description of the research sample, setting, methodology, limitations, and delimitations, and acknowledgement of trustworthy issues provide readers with a basis for accepting (or not accepting) the conclusions and recommendations that follow.

Quality Markers

A quality study achieves the purposes outlined in the introduction's research problem and research questions. Alignment between the research approach, research methodology, and methods of data collection and analysis used in this study is clear. All relevant information is clearly articulated and presented. As relevant, the narrative is accompanied by clear and descriptive visuals (charts, figures, tables). The chapter includes sufficient relevant detail so the study could be replicated.

Frequent Errors

Errors occur when data are not clearly presented, the study is not applicable to purposes outlined in the introduction, and methods of gathering and analyzing data and trustworthiness issues are insufficient or not clear or apparent.

Dissertation Chapter 4: Findings

This chapter organizes and reports the study's main findings, including presenting relevant quantitative (statistical) and qualitative (narrative) data. Findings are often written up in different ways depending on the research tradition or genre adopted.

- ✓ **Introduction:** The introduction provides a summary and rationale for analyzing data. It describes the organization of the chapter according to research questions, conceptual framework, or thematic categories.
- ✓ Findings are built logically from the problem, research questions, and research design. Describe study participants demographically.
- ✓ Report any quantitative analysis. Make sure both text and tables can stand alone. Present tables in appendices.
- ✓ Findings are presented in clear narrative form using plentiful verbatim quotes, and “thick description.” Narrative data are connected and synthesized through substantive explanatory text and visual displays, if applicable, not simply compiled. Some tables and figures may be deferred to the appendices.
- ✓ Findings are presented to show clearly how these address the study’s research problem and research questions.
- ✓ Headings and subheadings are used to guide the reader through the findings according to research questions, themes, or other appropriate organizational schemes.
- ✓ Rather than being ignored or overlooked, inconsistent, discrepant, or unexpected data are noted with discussion of possible alternative explanations.
- ✓ **Summary:** This section explains in summary form what the chapter has identified and prepares the reader for the chapters to follow by offering some foreshadowing as to the intent and content of the final two chapters.

Reason

This chapter is the foundation for the analysis and interpretation of findings, conclusions, and recommendations that will appear in the next and forthcoming chapters. Note that the special challenge of qualitative analysis lies in making sense of large amounts of data, reducing raw data, identifying what is significant, and constructing a framework for communicating the essence of what the data reveals. The researcher, as a storyteller, can tell a story that is vivid and interesting, and at the same time accurate and credible.

Quality Markers

Markers of a quality findings chapter include clear, complete, and credible representation of the data emerged from the study and effective use of graphs, charts, and other visual representations to illustrate it. The study’s findings are aligned with the research problem and purpose and respond to all research questions. Findings are presented objectively, without speculation—that is, free from researcher bias. The presentation and structure in this chapter are neat, precise, and directly aligned with the study’s methodology.

Frequent Errors

Errors occur when study findings are manipulated to fit expectations from research questions, when researcher bias and/or subjectivity is apparent, and/or when the presentation of findings is not aligned with the study’s chosen methodology. Other frequent errors include poor use of visual representation and findings that are ignored, overlooked, or are overly or inaccurately generalized.

This chapter synthesizes and discusses the results based on the study's research questions, literature review, and conceptual framework. Finding patterns and themes is one result of analysis. Finding ambiguities and inconsistencies is another. Overall, this chapter offers the researcher an opportunity to reflect thoroughly on the study's findings, and the practical and theoretical implications thereof.

- ✓ **Introduction:** The introduction provides an overview of the chapter's organization and content.
- ✓ **Discussion:** This section provides an in-depth interpretation, analysis, and synthesis of the results and/or findings.

--Analysis is a multilayered approach. Seeking emergent patterns among findings can be considered a first round of analysis. Examining whether the literature corresponds with, contradicts, and/or deepens interpretations constitutes a second layer of interpretation.

--Issues of trustworthiness (depending on method may include validity, reliability, generalizability, credibility, dependability, confirmability, and/or transferability) are incorporated as these relate to and are applied throughout the analysis process.

--Discussion may include interpretation of any findings that were not anticipated when the study was first described in previous chapters. Establishing credibility means that you have engaged in the systematic search for rival or competing explanations and interpretations.

--This section restates the study's limitations and discusses generalizability/transferability of the findings to broader populations or other settings and contexts.

Reason

Analysis is about searching for patterns and themes that emerge from the findings. Interpretation that is thoughtful and compelling provides the opportunity to make a worthwhile contribution to your academic discipline. This constitutes the necessary synthesis that this chapter calls for. The goal is to discover what meaning you as the researcher can make of them by comparing your findings both within and across groups, and with those of other studies.

Quality Markers

In quantitative research, there are conventions such as statistical significance and effect size that serve as quality indicators. There are no clear and accepted single set of conventions for the analysis and interpretation of qualitative data, but there are guidelines for each qualitative tradition. This dissertation chapter must reflect a deep understanding of what lies beneath the findings that are, what those findings really *mean*. Interpretation is presented systematically and is related to literature, theoretical or conceptual framework, and interpretive themes or patterns that have emerged. A key characteristic of qualitative research is willingness to tolerate ambiguity. As such, examining issues from all angles to demonstrate the most plausible explanations indicates high-level analysis. Integrity as a researcher is given credence by inclusion of all information, even that which challenges inferences and assumptions.

Frequent Errors

Frequent errors include analysis that is simple or shallow. Other errors include lack of synthesis, no clear connection to other research literature or theory, questionable credibility and/or plausibility of explanations is questionable, and when the chapter is poorly structured, presented, and articulated.

Conclusions Recommendations

This chapter presents a set of concluding statements and recommendations. Conclusions are assertions based on findings and must therefore be warranted by the findings. With respect to each finding, you ask yourself, “Knowing what I now know, what conclusion can I draw?” Recommendations are the application of those conclusions. In other words, you are now saying to yourself, “Knowing what I now know to be true, I recommend that . . .”

- ✓ Conclusions are based on an integration of the study findings, analysis, interpretation, and synthesis.
- ✓ Concluding statements end the dissertation with strong, clear, concise “takeaway messages” for the reader.
- ✓ Conclusions are different from findings; neither are conclusions the same as interpretations. Rather, conclusions are conclusive statements of what you now know, having done this research, that you did not know before.
- ✓ Conclusions must be logically tied to one another. There should be consistency among your conclusions; none of them should be at odds with any of the others.
- ✓ Recommendations are actionable; that is, they suggest implications for policy and practice based on the findings, providing specific action planning and next steps.
- ✓ Recommendations support the belief that scholarly work initiates as many questions as it answers, thus opening the way for further practice and research.
- ✓ Recommendations for research describe topics that require closer examination and that may generate new questions for further study.

Reason

This chapter reflects the contribution the researcher made to the knowledge, practice, and/or policy in study. In many ways, this chapter provides endorsement for the researcher’s entrance into the ranks of the body of scholars in the field.

Quality Markers

Clearly stated and focused concluding statements reflect an integration of the study findings, analysis, interpretation, and synthesis. Recommendations must have implications for policy and practice, and further research, and be doable. The reasonableness of a recommendation depends on its being logically aligned with and clearly derived from the findings, both content and context specific, and most important, practical, and capable of implementation.

Frequent Errors

Overgeneralization of importance or relevance sometimes leads to grandiose statements. Other frequent errors include the lack of a clear relationship to the review

of literature or recommendations that have no apparent usefulness for practice and future research; that is, they are not “doable.”

Epilogue, Afterword, or Final Thoughts (optional; used only in unusual circumstances)

This final section offers the researcher an opportunity to reflect on the overall process, review the findings that have emerged, and share any new learning and insights that have developed over the course of the research or writing process. How do you personally value research experience? What are the lessons you have learned from conducting the study? What insights, knowledge, and inspiration have you derived from conducting this study?

Back Matter

References

The list of references includes all works cited in the dissertation in alphabetical order by author and in proper APA format. All sources quoted, summarized, or paraphrased, and all other sources of information (text, visual, electronic, personal, etc.), must be correctly cited using APA parenthetical citation format within the dissertation. All sources must also be correctly listed on the references page.

Proper citation serves several purposes: It attributes work fairly to the author, places the dissertation within the context of the literature in the field, and provides readers with a quick resource for locating and accessing sources that were used.

Appendices

Appendices contain all research instruments used, as well as any relevant additional materials such as sample interview transcripts, sample coding schemes, summary charts, and so forth. Each item included as an appendix (unless only one appendix) is given a letter designation and listed in the table of contents.

NASW DISSERTATION ABSTRACTS

The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) is encouraging all graduate schools of social work to submit doctoral student (PhD/DSW) dissertation abstracts for publication in NASW's *Social Work Abstracts* database and journal.

The word count for dissertation abstracts is now 300 words. This increase brings our abstracts in line with the requirements for most schools of social work. It also allows graduates broader exposure for their research. Also, there is an [online permissions form](#) for dissertation advisors to submit abstracts electronically. To complete this form, you may use the link provided on

NASW Press' Web site under Faculty Center or Student

Center. [Guidelines for Dissertation Abstracts](#) are also provided for your review. Dissertation advisors can send each abstract electronically as an attachment or the form may be downloaded and mailed with the dissertation abstract.

The Association hopes our regular updates to the database make it easier for graduate schools of social work and doctoral students to continue supporting NASW's *Social Work Abstracts* database and journal. We look forward to receiving your dissertation abstracts and having them included in the research database of the social work profession.

For more information, please contact: Aneatha Robinson, arobinson@naswdc.org or (202) 336-8246.

Appendix

Forms

Appendix A

Comprehensive Paper Outline (from Krathwohl & Smith, 2005)

How well did the student	Strong	Acceptable	Weak improve ment needed	No t applic able
Begin the introduction with a strong, clear problem statement?				
Clearly state and describe the problem ?				
Demonstrate the problem's importance?				
Show the problem's generality?				
Appropriately limit the problem's scope?				
Adequately balance completeness and brevity?				

Provide a perspective on				
the entire proposal?				
Set a proper frame of reference?				
Select the most appropriate studies to support the proposed research?				
Carefully evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of prior research and thought?				

Explain how the essential details of each study are relevant to the problem to be studied?				
--	--	--	--	--

Critically, yet succinctly, summarize current substantive knowledge about the problem?				
Clearly provide a theoretical framework?				
Convincingly argue why the study will appropriately address questions, hypotheses, or models as it related to social work leadership and/or education?				
Clearly show how the study will both build upon, and go beyond, prior research, substantively and/or methodologically?				

Appendix B

Comprehensive Paper Rating Millersville University DSW Program

Date:

Student's Name:

Signatures below indicate the rating of Comprehensive Paper:

Pass

Pass with Revisions

Not Pass

Pass or Pass with Revisions: required to enter the dissertation phase of the program (Fall Semester of the Third Year); student has met all requirements but the dissertation in the DSW program and has entered candidacy (ABD).

Not Pass: student will receive feedback on what remedial work is required, which must be addressed and completed by the end of the summer before the Fall Semester of the Third Year. The original committee will review the remedial work and decide or determine, in consultation with DSW Program Director, whether the student is able to proceed to the dissertation phase.

Signature of MU DSW Director or designated Faculty Member

Signature of Dissertation Chair or designated Faculty Member

Millersville University
College of Graduate Studies and Adult Learning

THESIS/DISSERTATION/SCHOLARLY PROJECT REQUEST FORM

PART 1: TO BE COMPLETED BY STUDENT *(Submit completed form to Registrar's Office – Lyle Hall)*

Student's Last Name	First Name	MI
_____	_____	_____
MU ID Number	Graduate Program	Expected Graduation Date
_____	_____	_____
Local Address	Local Phone Number	
_____	_____	
Student Signature	Date	Email Address
_____	_____	_____
Thesis/Dissertation/Project Advisor Signature		Date
_____		_____
Thesis/Dissertation/Project Advisor Printed Name		Advisor MU ID
_____		_____

PART 2: TO BE COMPLETED BY ADVISOR

<p>CHECK ONE:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> THESIS</p> <p>SUBJECT _____ COURSE # _____ CREDITS _____</p> <p>TOPIC TITLE: _____</p> <p>ABBREVIATED TITLE FOR TRANSCRIPT: (max 22 spaces)</p> <p>_____</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> DISSERTATION / <input type="checkbox"/> SCHOLARLY PROJECT</p> <p>SUBJECT _____ COURSE # _____ CREDITS _____</p> <p>TOPIC TITLE: _____</p> <p>ABBREVIATED TITLE FOR TRANSCRIPT: (max 22 spaces)</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>COURSE INFORMATION:</p> <p>Fall _____ Summer 1 _____</p> <p>Spring _____ Summer 2 _____</p> <p>Winter _____ Summer 3 _____</p>
---	---

PART 3: SIGNATURES REQUIRED FOR APPROVAL AND PAYMENT AUTHORIZATION

Department Chair	Date
Dean of College	Date
Graduate Coordinator	Date

For Registrar's Office use only: CRN_____

c: Graduate Studies Office

For a PDF of this form see: [thesis---dissertation--scholarly-project-request-form-jan-2024 \(1\).docx](#)

Millersville University

College of Graduate Studies and Adult Learning

THESIS/DISSERTATION/SCHOLARLY PROJECT REQUEST FORM

PART 1: TO BE COMPLETED BY STUDENT (***Submit completed form to Registrar's Office – Lyle Hall***)

Student's Last Name

First Name

MI

MU ID Number

Graduate Program

Expected Graduation Date

Local Address

Local Phone Number

Student Signature

Date

Email Address

Thesis/Dissertation/Project Advisor Signature

Date

Thesis/Dissertation/Project Advisor Printed Name

PART 2: TO BE COMPLETED BY ADVISOR

CHECK ONE:

☐ **THESIS** SUBJECT/COURSE
_____ CREDITS _____

TOPIC TITLE:

ABBREVIATED TITLE FOR TRANSCRIPT: (max 22 spaces)

☐ **DISSERTATION/PROJECT** SUBJECT/COURSE
_____ CREDITS _____

TOPIC TITLE:

COURSE INFORMATION:

Fall _____ Summer 1 _____

Spring _____ Summer 2 _____

Winter _____ Summer 3 _____

ABBREVIATED TITLE FOR TRANSCRIPT: (max 22 spaces)

PART 3: SIGNATURES REQUIRED FOR APPROVAL AND PAYMENT AUTHORIZATION

Department Chair

Date

Dean of College

Date

For Registrar's Office use only: CRN _____
Office

c: Graduate Studies

For a PDF of the form see: <https://www.millersville.edu/admissions/graduate/current-student-resources/thesis---dissertation--scholarly-project-request-form-oct-20181.pdf>

Millersville University

College of Graduate Studies and Adult Learning

DISSERTATION/SCHOLARLY PROJECT EXAMINATION REPORT

Student's Name

MU ID #

Academic Department

Date of Examination _____ Program _____

Title of Dissertation _____

Action taken on Dissertation/Scholarly Project:

_____ Approved

_____ Approved with revisions suggested by committee and to be checked by chair.

_____ Schedule a re-exam after corrections or revisions have been made.

_____ Not Approved (Specific reasons in writing should be attached)

_____ Other (Please explain)

Names of Examining Committee:

Chair of Committee signature

date

*** Please note this is for notification of approval only, grade must be submitted via Banner web grading to appear officially on transcript.**

Submit completed form directly to the Dean of the College of Graduate Studies and Adult Learning in Lyle Hall, Room 235.

For a PDF of the form see: <https://www.millersville.edu/admissions/graduate/current-student-resources/thesis--dissertation--scholarly-project-request-form-oct-20181.pdf>

Permission to Digitize, Millersville University

As a program requirement, all DSW dissertations must be submitted to the College of Graduate Studies and Adult Learning for archiving and publication. Refer to the Millersville University Thesis/Dissertation/Scholarly Project Policy for requirements related to submission of your Dissertation and required paperwork to complete.

Permission to Digitize Thesis, Dissertation or Scholarly Project

Author: _____ Manuscript Date: _____

Title: _____

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Authority to grant license. I represent and warrant that I am the sole author and owner of the copyright in my Manuscript, and that I have full and sole authority to grant this permission. I also represent that this Manuscript does not, to the best of my knowledge, infringe or violate any rights of others. I have obtained any third-party rights, if necessary.

Permission Granted By

(Print Author’s name)

(Signature of Author)

Address

City/State/Zip

Date

Phone Number or E-mail address

Mail or email a completed, signed form to:

College of Graduate Studies & Adult Learning

P.O. Box 1002 Millersville University

Millersville, PA 17551

goffasst@millersville.edu

For a PDF of the form see: <https://www.millersville.edu/graduate/current-student-resources/thesis->

MU DSW LEADERSHIP & FACULTY

See Website: <https://www.millersville.edu/socialwork/faculty/index.php>

Doctor of Social Work Faculty, Millersville

Bethel, Joyous C. (At MU since 2011). B.A., Social Work, University of Oklahoma, 1981; M.S.W., University of Oklahoma, 1982; Ph.D., Barry University, 1997.

Assistant Professor of Social Work & Gerontology Minor Coordinator

Interest Areas: practice, HBSE, diversity, field instruction, spirituality; complicated mourning. Major

Teaching Areas: Gerontology, Social Work and Aging, Encounters in Human Diversity, Human Behavior in the Social Environment, Field Instruction.

E-Mail: Joyous.Bethel@millersville.edu

Felizzi, Marc V. (At MU since 2011) BA, Glassboro State College, 1978; MSW, Delaware State University, 1995; Ph.D., Widener University, 2010.

Associate Professor of Social Work

Interest Areas: practice, policy, human behavior, and trauma.

Major Teaching Areas: Social Work Practice, Micro/Mezzo SOWK Practice, Emergency Mental Health and Trauma, Family Violence.

E-Mail Address: Marc.Felizzi@millersville.edu

Foels, Leonora E. (At MU since 2009). BS, Webber College, 1988; MSW; Simmons College, School of Social Work, 1993; Ph.D., Barry University, School of Social Work, 2007.

Associate Professor of Social Work; Coordinator, BASW Online Degree Completion Delivery Option

Interest Areas: school social work, mental health, social work education, diversity, international social work Major Teaching Areas: Micro/Mezzo Practice, Diversity, School Social Work, Global Social Issues

E-Mail Address: Leonora.Foels@millersville.edu

Frank, Jennifer M. (At MU since 2010). B.A., Millersville University, 1999; M.S.W.,

Millersville/Shippensburg University, 2009; PhD, Bryn Mawr College Graduate School of Social Work and Social Research, 2017.

Assistant Professor of Social Work

Interest Areas: housing and homelessness, poverty, social policy, program management/development, field education, micro/macro practice.

Major Teaching Areas: Introduction to Social Welfare, Perspectives on Poverty, Policy, HBSE. E-Mail:

Jennifer.Frank@millersville.edu

Girvin, Heather L. (At MU since 2006) BA, Dickinson College, 1992; MSS, Bryn Mawr College Graduate School of Social Work & Social Research, 1995; Ph.D., Bryn Mawr College Graduate School of Social Work & Social Research, 2002.

Associate Professor of Social Work,

Interest Areas: child welfare, research, diversity

Major Teaching Areas: Child Welfare, Human Behavior & the Social Environment, Diversity,

Family Violence, Writing for Social Work Practice

E-Mail Address: Heather.Girvin@millersville.edu

Granruth, Laura Brierton (At MU since 2013) BA, Fordham College, 1984; MSW, Virginia

Commonwealth University, 2001; Ph.D. Catholic University, 2009. Associate Professor of Social Work and MSW Program Director Interest Areas: social policy, advocacy, social justice, social work in healthcare; applied community research Major Teaching Areas: Health Care, Human Behavior & the Social Environment, Social Policy, Writing for Social Work Practice. E-Mail Address: Laura.Granruth@millersville.edu

Ogongi, Wanja (At MU since 2016). BA, University of Nairobi; MSW, West Chester University; PhD Social Work, Widener University. Assistant Professor of Social Work Interest areas: International human rights (focus on women and children), child welfare, Refugees and unaccompanied minors, medical social work Major Teaching Areas: Research, HBSE, Social work practice E-Mail Address: Wanja.Ogongi@millersville.edu

Proctor, Curtis (At MU since 2014) BS, University of Oklahoma, 1989. MSW University of Iowa, 1992. Ph.D., Case Western Reserve University, 2005. Assistant Professor of Social Work Interest Areas: LGBT Youth, Indian Child Welfare Act, attachment, social work, and the arts Major Teaching Areas: Cultural Competency, Research, Human Behavior in the Social Environment, Advanced Generalist Practice, Statistics E-Mail Address: Curits.Proctor@millersville.edu

Redcay, Alex. (At MU since 2016). BA, Truman State University, 2001; MSW, Southern Connecticut State University, 2008; PhD. Rutgers University, 2016. Associate Professor of Social Work Interest Areas: mental health, substance abuse and LGBT issues. Major Teaching Areas: Macro & Micro Practice, Diversity, Research E-Mail Address: Alexandra.Redcay@millersville.edu

Rice, Karen M. (At MU since 2006). BA, Millersville University, 1991; MSW, Temple University, 2000; PhD. University of Maryland, School of Social Work, 2011. Professor of Social Work, School of Social Work Chairperson Interest Areas: child welfare, research, statistics, diversity, international social work Major Teaching Areas: Social Work & Child Welfare, Social Work Research, Advanced Research Methods, Social Work Statistics, Encounters in Human Diversity, Global Perspectives in Social Work. E-Mail Address: Karen.Rice@millersville.edu

Saldaña DeJesus, Bertha (At MU Since 2012): B.A. (in Social Work), Shippensburg University, 1998. M.S.W., Widener University, 2004; D.S.W. Millersville University, 2018. Assistant Professor of Social Work Interest Areas: field, aging, child welfare. Major Teaching Areas: Field, Micro, Mezzo, Macro Practice, Child Welfare. E-Mail: Bertha.DeJesus@millersville.edu

Walsh, Kathleen M. (At MU since 2007). BSW, University of Maryland Baltimore, 1996; MSW, University of Maryland, 1997; Ph.D., University of Maryland, School of Social Work, 2006. Associate Professor of Social Work, BSW Program Coordinator Interest Areas: predictors of salary in social work, workforce and occupational issues including career choice, social work ethics, social work administration/management, technology, and social service delivery. Major Teaching Areas: Social Work Practice, Social Work History, Social Policy, Macro and Micro Practice, Program Management and Supervision E-Mail Address: Kathleen.Walsh@millersville.edu

