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INTRODUCTION

Disclaimer

Neither the Dissertation Process Manual, nor any of the information and requirements contained herein, constitute a contract or create any contractual commitments between Capella University and any student, any prospective student, or any third party. The information and program requirements contained in the Dissertation Process Manual are subject to change.

Purpose of the PhD Dissertation Process Manual

This manual supports learners and faculty at Capella University in understanding the dissertation process. It provides an overview of the dissertation process and outlines 16 milestones by which learners fulfill the academic and administrative requirements for the PhD degree at Capella University. The manual also describes in broad terms the roles and responsibilities of the learner, the mentor, the dissertation committee members, and university support staff.

In addition to the general requirements, individual schools and specializations may have further requirements for dissertations or degree conferral not detailed here. Learners are responsible for the requirements detailed in this manual as well as for requirements of their school and specialization. Information concerning school-specific requirements for dissertation, guidance for writing the dissertation, and additional resources to support the dissertation process is located on iGuide under Doctoral Resources & Support.

Learners must ensure that their dissertations meet the guidelines outlined in the current version of the PhD Dissertation Process Manual. Learners are responsible for remaining aware of updates to this manual, as the contents of this manual are subject to change without notice. Check the version number and date on the title page of the manual.

Setting the PhD Dissertation Process Manual in Context

The PhD Dissertation Process Manual provides an overview of the dissertation process, including required milestones. Doctoral learners should also be familiar with the Doctoral Manual: Program Requirements and Procedures. Whereas the focus of this PhD Dissertation Process Manual is the dissertation phase of the PhD program itself, the Doctoral Manual outlines the comprehensive curriculum for all doctoral degrees.
Each school has also developed documents to support learner success in dissertation. These documents are located under Doctoral Resources & Support on iGuide.
CHAPTER 1. OVERVIEW OF THE DISSERTATION PROCESS

The dissertation experience emphasizes learner development and growth from novice researcher to independent scholar-practitioner. The dissertation process has been designed to provide each learner the opportunity to train as a researcher and learn the knowledge, skills, and thought processes necessary to conduct independent research. Further, the dissertation serves to demonstrate the learner’s mastery of the discipline’s knowledge base, acquired professional skills and competencies, and aptitude for doing independent research. In this endeavor, the learner enters the research phase of the degree program and is dedicated to developing a dissertation that advances knowledge in the field, contributes to theory, and meets Capella University’s hallmarks of good research.

Capella University’s PhD scholar-practitioner model emphasizes the importance of connecting theory and practice and offers a constructivist synergy: The experiences that learners bring to their studies are the platform on which new knowledge can be built through dialogue and scholarly activity. The process of “becoming doctoral” represents a historically rich tradition of transitioning from being a consumer of information to exploring one’s own character, intellectual capacity, intelligences, identity, habits of mind, and overall developmental formation as an emergent knowledge producer.

It is important to understand the dissertation process within the context of the overall structure of Capella’s PhD programs, which include several different yet interrelated components: didactic coursework, Dissertation Research Seminars with embedded residencies, comprehensive examination, and the dissertation courseroom.

Didactic Course Work

Didactic course work provides the competency framework for each PhD program. Learners prepare for dissertation in their doctoral course work by helping them become familiar with the literature and theories of their field and develop advanced competencies in research, writing, and critical thinking. Doctoral learners learn the relevant theories and research methods of their program and build the skills necessary for independent research.
Dissertation Research Seminars with Embedded Residencies

PhD learners must complete three Dissertation Research Seminars (sometimes referred to as Research Seminars), each of which includes a four-day face-to-face residency. Residencies are intensive academic experiences, where learners connect with faculty and peers and learn and practice the skills that will make them scholarly researchers. Dissertation Research Seminars are strategically positioned within each learner’s overall academic plan based on the learner’s specific program, and are generally expected to be taken near the end of the first year of the program, in the middle of the program, and just prior to the comprehensive examination. Work on the dissertation itself formally begins in the first Dissertation Research Seminar. In the first seminar, learners complete their research ethics education and learn how to identify a research problem, develop a research topic, and conduct a literature review to justify the topic. During the second and third seminars, learners work on developing and obtaining formal approval of their dissertation topic and research plan.

Comprehensive Examination

Following the completion of all didactic coursework and the three Dissertation Research Seminars, learners take a comprehensive examination. The purpose of the comprehensive examination is to directly assess learner’s demonstration of program-level learning outcomes in order to determine their preparedness to design, implement, analyze, and report independent dissertation research and pursue a scholar-practitioner career. Learners must respond to three examination questions focused on three themes: synthesizing and applying theory, reviewing the scholarly literature, and understanding and applying research methodology. The focus on theory, literature and research methods ensures learners will likely be able to leverage some of their comprehensive examination work in their dissertation. Additional information about the Comprehensive Examination can be found in the Comprehensive Examination Manual.

Dissertation Courseroom

Following successful completion of the comprehensive examination, learners are assigned dissertation mentors and registered in a dissertation courseroom with other dissertation learners at various phases of the dissertation process, in which the assigned mentor is the courseroom instructor. One of the most commonly cited benefits of the courseroom is the networking and sense of academic community it builds among learners. Learners use their dissertation courseroom as the main point of contact with the mentor and peers. Learners are strongly encouraged to participate in the network building the courseroom provides.
Dissertation Milestones

Every dissertation is unique, but the dissertation process moves through a similar sequence of steps for all learners. Capella refers to these steps as *milestones*. Progress in the dissertation is measured by progress through the milestones. In the dissertation courseroom, each milestone is associated with a specific assignment.

While it is generally expected that you complete at least one Dissertation Milestone per quarter (with the exception of Milestone 8, which is expected to take longer), the time required to complete each dissertation milestone may vary. The speed of progress depends on the nature of the research plan and how quickly, carefully, and effectively the learner applies academic and research competencies. The 16 dissertation milestones are listed below.

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¹ Formerly known as “Format Editing” Completion

Use of Previous Work

In writing the dissertation, learners are allowed to use previous coursework submitted at Capella. Indeed, learners are expected to build on the work they began in their PhD Dissertation Research Seminars and to draw from their comprehensive examination. Allowing learners to build on their prior coursework aligns with Capella’s competency-based educational model.
and philosophy. It is important to note, however, that learners are responsible for rectifying any errors not previously identified when using previously submitted work within their dissertation.

**Doctoral Manual**

The published dissertation is the culmination and lasting record of the PhD process. Whereas the focus of the *PhD Dissertation Process Manual* is the dissertation process itself, the *Doctoral Manual: Program Requirements and Procedures* outlines the comprehensive curriculum for all doctoral degrees. See Chapter 5 for further discussion of the *Doctoral Manual*. 
CHAPTER 2. UNDERSTANDING THE DISSERTATION

Defining the Dissertation

Capella University’s PhD programs train scholar-practitioners for a variety of careers in research, education, administration, and professional practice. The PhD programs train highly qualified scholar-practitioners to master a field of study and contribute to their discipline by advancing original research. The PhD credentials imply that the holder has completely mastered a specific subject area and is capable of extending the body of knowledge by

- Conducting independent, thorough, scholarly research.
- Exhibiting high-level critical thinking.
- Writing at a scholarly level.

All PhD programs require didactic course work, qualifying comprehensive examinations, and a demonstration of research competence: the dissertation. At Capella, areas of specialization appear on a doctoral learner’s transcript, but in reality the subject of the dissertation establishes the specific area of scholarly expertise.

The dissertation is the culmination of a learning process that demonstrates the PhD learner’s mastery and ability to conduct independent research. Successful completion of the dissertation requires a number of crucial skills that together help the learner develop independent thought, judgment, and critical thinking. The dissertation requires the learner to research and evaluate relevant reference materials to formulate pertinent questions and hypotheses, design an appropriate research study to answer those questions or test the hypotheses, engage in the highest level of critical thought in order to make a substantive contribution to the theory or practice of the discipline or field of study, and present findings in the form of a coherent, scholarly manuscript. The end result is original research that generates new knowledge and conforms to conventions for academic integrity and scholarly writing, and is a contribution to existing scholarship.

The typical Capella doctoral dissertation is divided into five chapters. The five chapters are as follows:

- Chapter 1. Introduction.
- Chapter 2. Literature Review.
• Chapter 3. Methodology.
• Chapter 4. Results.
• Chapter 5. Discussion, Implications, and Recommendations.

Information concerning contents and structure of the chapters of the dissertation can be found in each school’s Dissertation Chapter Guides, located on iGuide in Doctoral Resources & Support.

Learners should also consult the Dissertation Rubrics, also located on iGuide in Doctoral Resources & Support, to ensure their dissertation work includes all essential elements and meets the expected standards of quality and academic rigor.

**Programs of Research and Acceptable Methods for Dissertations**

Types of dissertation research at Capella closely follow those found in the scholarly literature of learners’ disciplines or fields of study. Learners begin the dissertation with the development of a research plan. Learners select and defend a research topic, question, design, and methodology. Selection of an appropriate topic, question, design, and method must be defensible on an academic, objective level rather than personal, subjective level.

Each school has identified Programs of Research, or research topic areas which are appropriate and relevant to their field, and are represented within the Specialization by faculty who have an interest and expertise in those topics. Schools have also identified acceptable methods for dissertations in the school. More information can be found in the school-specific materials located on iGuide in Doctoral Resources & Support.

A [Glossary of Terms](#) related to research methods is discussed in Chapter 7.
CHAPTER 3. MENTEE-MENTOR ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Writing a dissertation is not an independent effort. Doctoral learners receive support and feedback from a range of doctoral faculty, including course instructors, Dissertation Research Seminar faculty, mentor, dissertation committee members, IRB members, and other faculty who have expertise relevant to the dissertation. Some faculty provide feedback based on their strong skills in research design and data analysis, while other faculty may offer subject matter expertise. Regardless of the support received from doctoral faculty, learners are solely responsible for the quality and integrity of all aspects of their dissertation.

Role of Dissertation Mentee

Upon entering the dissertation phase of a PhD program, the graduate student achieves the status of a PhD Candidate, moving from the role of learner to the role of mentee. He or she is now an individual engaged in professional research who works with a faculty mentor to complete each of the dissertation milestones.

Mentees are expected to

- Apply understanding about the research process in completion of each dissertation milestone.
- Use Capella dissertation resources to develop a research plan and dissertation manuscript that aligns with school and university requirements.
- Dive deeply into the scholarly study of the literature, applying the skills and competencies gained as a PhD learner.
- Keep the principles of the ethical conduct of research at the forefront of research design and implementation.
- Avoid research misconduct and academic dishonesty by ensuring the integrity of the data collection process and avoiding plagiarism.
- Assess personal understanding of the research process and discuss areas of concern as well as researcher strengths with the mentor.
• Seek referral information from the mentor and other academic support experts to address gaps in research knowledge and understanding.

• Proactively and independently seek information regarding their topic, data collection and analyses procedures, and other relevant aspects of the research as needed to complete the dissertation.

• Actively engage in seeking information about the dissertation process, learn about the milestone sequence, and map milestone tasks and activities to a personal dissertation plan of action.

• Communicate regularly with mentor in the dissertation courseroom and adhere to mentor’s stated expectations regarding frequency of communication and the timelines for assignments and deliverables.

• Understand, synthesize and incorporate faculty feedback toward the completion of dissertation milestones and deliverables.

Role of the Dissertation Mentor

Each dissertation learner, or mentee, works with a faculty mentor to progress through the dissertation completion process. The mentor’s role is a combination of leader and collaborator, director and facilitator, coach and challenger. The mentor role is dedicated to providing the mentee with the guidance and support that allows the mentee to consistently make progress toward dissertation completion, while also systematically reducing the level of support from the beginning to the end of the dissertation so that the mentee becomes increasingly independent in their research skills.

The following are understood as mentor responsibilities to the mentee:

• Establish expectations regarding frequency of communication; regular check-ins; and mentor-initiated contact to evaluate progress, provide feedback, and offer supportive guidance.

• Engage regularly in the dissertation courseroom once communication expectations have been established.

• Provide research process guidance and direction throughout the dissertation process.

• Highlight Capella resources to mentees. Referrals may include university resources found on iGuide, milestone-specific resources such as IRB materials, and school-specific resources.
• Collaborate with mentees to promote consistent progress in milestone completion. For example, many external factors can influence how a mentee progresses toward milestone completion. The mentor, however, consistently follows up with mentees to assess progress, help mentees redirect their focus, or to set due dates for deliverables.

• Advise mentees about research plan requirements that ensure alignment with ethical conduct of research and school or specialization requirements. When necessary, mentors will require changes to ensure that tenets of ethical research are honored.

• Respectfully yet directly provide critical feedback on dissertation deliverables.

**Mentor-Mentee Relationship**

The dissertation is a scholarly research study completed by the mentee with the guidance, support, and direction of the mentor. The working relationship between the learner mentee and the faculty mentor focuses on one ultimate goal: the learner’s completion of the dissertation. At each step in the dissertation process, the mentee produces deliverables for mentor review and critique. The mentee uses his or her mentor’s feedback to clarify, revise, strengthen, and complete each dissertation element. This iterative process is the backbone of the mentor-mentee relationship.

The following key assumptions form the infrastructure for this crucial working relationship:

• Both mentor and mentee commit to uphold the ethical principles for the conduct of research as integral to the dissertation process. This includes discussions about ensuring participant protections and avoiding research misconduct and academic dishonesty as the research plan is developed or as part of the implementation stage of the research study.

• Mentee and mentor each bring specific competencies, skills, and knowledge to their collaboration. For example, mentees focus on a particular area of research interest, while mentors provide guidance and direction on the implementation of the research plan and development of the dissertation manuscript.

• Mentees respect that the mentor has experience in dissertation completion and has expertise that the mentee can benefit from; based on this, mentees value and use the advice provided.

• Mentors respect that the mentee is engaged in a learning process and that mentees can benefit from guidance and direction from the mentor while exercising independent decision making and personal accountability for their dissertation process and research.
• Mentees are independent researchers who accept the guidance, coaching, direction, and support provided by the mentor to complete dissertation milestones.

• Each mentor-mentee relationship has its own interpersonal dynamic. As the relationship moves forward, its effectiveness and maintenance requires both mentor and mentee to engage in objective, respectful, and consistent communication.

• Mentors and mentees work together to ensure that communication channels are used and kept in good working order. For example, mentors or mentees who are confused or lack clarity about expectations must discuss solutions in an open and timely manner.
CHAPTER 4. UNDERSTANDING THE DISSERTATION MILESTONES

The 9960 courseroom contains thorough discussion of the milestones and the specific activities and tasks related to each milestone. The 16 milestones are briefly discussed below. *Note: Learners who completed Milestones 1, 2, 3, 4, and/or 5 in Residency will pick up with the next milestone in the sequence once enrolled in Dissertation.

Milestone 1. Research Ethics Education Completion

Overview: Learners complete a human subjects research course through the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI). The 10-module course provides basic information on the ethical principles and federal regulations that protect human subjects. CITI training ensures that learner researchers understand key concepts such as research misconduct, informed consent, and conflict of interest; a minimum score of 85% correct overall is required for the certificate of completion. Submission of a CITI Completion Report is required for completion of Milestone 1.

Significance: Completing research ethics training prepares learners to design a research plan that aligns with current ethical standards of research.

Milestone 2. Topic Approval

Overview: Mentor submits the topic (Sections 1 and 2 of the Dissertation Research Plan) to doctoral@capella.edu for official review and approval. Before the mentor submits to the school, the learner will submit their research topic to the mentor for feedback and approval. The topic is the overarching area of inquiry to be explored in the dissertation. Researching, crafting, and revising the topic are to be expected before the milestone is completed.

Significance: The topic of the dissertation will guide the structure of the dissertation work yet to be done.

Milestone 3. Mentor-Approved Research Plan

Overview: Learners submit their research plan to the mentor for feedback and approval. As with topic approval, the research plan may require multiple iterations before it receives mentor approval. Milestone 3 is marked complete when the mentor approves the research plan.
Significance: The completed research plan specifically addresses all aspects of the proposed study. It functions as the working outline of the dissertation research.

Milestone 4. Committee-Approved Research Plan

Overview: The mentor shares the approved research plan with the dissertation committee for review, feedback, and approval. Even though the mentor approved the research plan in Milestone 3, the plan may require revision before final approval from the dissertation committee. Milestone 4 is marked complete once the committee formally approves the research plan.

Significance: Milestone 4 ensures that the full dissertation committee has read the learner’s proposed research plan and has asked clarifying questions, provided input, and, when necessary, redirected the learner.

Milestone 5. Scientific Merit Approval

Overview: The mentor submits the mentor- and committee-approved research plan to Doctoral Support for scientific merit approval. A study is considered to have scientific merit when it advances knowledge in the field, contributes to theory, and meets requirements for sound research methodology. A scientific merit reviewer (SMR) assigned by the school returns a formal review. Learners should be prepared for multiple iterations before the research plan obtains final SMR approval.

Significance: Demonstration of scientific merit in the research plan is a necessary condition for IRB approval.

Milestone 6. Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval

Overview: Learners submit their research plan and materials to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for IRB approval. All IRBs ensure that the rights of human research participants are respected. For the Capella learner, three documents are key to determining whether research procedures are aligned with current ethical standards: the Belmont Report, the Code of Federal Regulations 45 part 46 (45 CFR 46), and Capella university policy 3.03.01 Human Research Protections.

Significance: Learner researchers are responsible for adhering to ethical and legal standards as well as the specific research guidelines for their discipline. Once IRB approval is granted, the research procedures and methods cannot be
changed without consultation and approval from the IRB. Any changes must also be approved by the Research Chair in your School.

**Milestone 7. Pre-Data-Collection Conference Call**

*Overview:* Learners coordinate and complete their pre-data-collection conference call. Learners present their approved research plan and ensure that they and their committee understand the proposed methodology. In the pre-data-collection call, the committee will offer guidance as necessary before the data collection begins.

*Significance:* As learner researchers move into the data collection phase of their research, the pre-data-collection call allows the learner to recap the work that has already been done and articulate the work that lies ahead.

**Milestone 8. Mentor-Approved Chapters 1 and 2**

*Overview:* Learners submit Chapters 1 and 2 of the dissertation to the mentor. The full background of the study comprises Chapter 1. Chapter 2 is a comprehensive literature review supporting the research.

*Significance:* The mentor provides guidance and feedback as the writing of the dissertation manuscript moves forward.

**Milestone 9. Mentor-Approved Chapters 3, 4, and 5**

*Overview:* Learners submit Chapters 3, 4, and 5 of the dissertation to the mentor. In Chapter 3, the methodology chapter, the learner explains and justifies the choice of research design, data collection, and analysis, and details the steps of the research design. In Chapter 4, the data analyses and results are presented. In Chapter 5, learners evaluate their research, providing insight into and interpret of the results of the study. These chapters display the research sophistication, critical thinking skills, and mastery of the content area of the dissertation.

*Significance:* Chapters 3, 4, and 5 complete the body of the dissertation.

**Milestone 10. Committee-Approved Dissertation**

*Overview:* The mentor submits the dissertation to the entire dissertation committee for review. Learners confer with their mentor to receive and address committee feedback.
Significance: The dissertation reflects on the learner, the mentor, the committee, and the school. In Milestone 10, the full committee has the opportunity to review the progress of the dissertation.

**Milestone 11. School-Approved Dissertation**

**Overview:** The school reviewer assesses and approves the dissertation. This review generally includes an academic honesty check. In this milestone, the dissertation manuscript moves from the relatively small audience of the committee to the larger audience of the school. Learners confer with their mentor to address school feedback.

Significance: All dissertations must have school-level approval.

**Milestone 12. Doctoral Publications Review (formerly Format Editing) Completed**

**Overview:** For Milestone 12, the Doctoral Success Center submits your school-approved dissertation to the Doctoral Publications team (formerly known as the Format Editing team) for a thorough review to ensure the document aligns with Capella’s form and style guidelines and meets the standards for publication. The Doctoral Publications team is responsible for reviewing your dissertation to identify revisions needed prior to publication. You are responsible for working with your mentor to make the required revisions.

Significance: The Doctoral Publications Review (formerly known as Format Editing) must be completed before scheduling your final conference call with your committee. Following the review, you will confer with your mentor to make required revisions to your dissertation manuscript.

**Milestone 13. Final Conference Call**

**Overview:** Learners coordinate and complete the final conference call. The final conference call is an opportunity for the researcher to present the research. Committee members may raise questions or require additions to the dissertation. Any committee suggestions and feedback regarding revisions must be incorporated into the final manuscript. The conference call may also yield suggestions for future research.
Significance: The dissertation completion conference call is a forum for the learner to share and discuss the completed dissertation with the committee.

Milestone 14. Final Manuscript Approval

Overview: Learners submit the manuscript to the mentor for final approval. Milestone 14 is the last step before the manuscript moves to publication. Revisions specified during format editing must be completed before the mentor approves the manuscript.

Significance: The published dissertation is a permanent and public record of the learner’s scholarly endeavors.

Milestone 15. Manuscript Submitted for Publication

Overview: Learners submit the approved final manuscript for publication.

Significance: Publication to ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Database is required for the dean’s final approval.

Milestone 16. Dean’s Final Manuscript Approval

Overview: Capella submits the approved final manuscript for the dean’s approval.

Significance: Once the manuscript has been submitted for publication, Capella facilitates a final review of the dissertation for approval by the school’s dean. This internal process does not require action from either the mentor or the learner.
CHAPTER 5. ADMINISTRATIVE REQUIREMENTS

Information related to learners’ academic standing and satisfactory academic progress during the dissertation is located in university policy 3.01.10 Doctoral Learners and the Doctoral Manual: Program Requirements and Procedures. Learners must familiarize themselves with the policy and the manual and consult each throughout their doctoral studies.

University Policy 3.01.10 Doctoral Learners

As the policy states, “Capella University recognizes that completing a doctoral degree requires demonstration of unique competencies not present in other degree levels. This policy outlines and defines the procedures and requirements of program components necessary for doctoral degree conferral.” Further specifications on academic standing for doctoral learners are available at Capella university policy 3.01.10 Doctoral Learners.

Capella University Doctoral Manual: Program Requirements and Procedures

The Doctoral Manual: Program Requirements and Procedures is a companion to Capella’s University Catalog and university policy. All doctoral-level degrees are represented in the Doctoral Manual, organized by degree program. Each section indicates which of the curricular components related to specific doctoral degrees are required for a learner’s degree program (and specialization, if applicable), helping learners proactively navigate its specific requirements. Procedural information related to each degree program’s components and references to other key information helps learners plan. For more information, refer to the Doctoral Manual.

Academic Standing

Pertinent policy information: Per university policy 3.01.04 Academic Standing and the Doctoral Manual, learners who fail to successfully complete all dissertation milestones and progress “satisfactorily” through the dissertation courseroom may be administratively withdrawn from their degree program. Learners who receive a Not Satisfactory (“NS”) grade will receive an academic standing warning notification. Learners who receive a second consecutive NS grade will be notified that they will be withdrawn due to failure to maintain satisfactory academic standing, and will be given the option to appeal. Learners who have their appeal granted will be allowed to register for one additional quarter. Learners who receive an “NS” grade in the third consecutive quarter will be administratively withdrawn with no additional options for appeal. Learners who earn a Satisfactory (“S”) grade at any point in this process will return to good academic standing.
CHAPTER 6. DISSERTATION SUCCESS

As learners move through the milestone process, they may simultaneously face the challenges of staying motivated and staying connected with their advisor and mentor. At times, too, learners may feel discouraged or require additional academic or personal support. It is critical that learners ask for help when it is needed. Visiting the dissertation courseroom at least three times each week, and posting at least once a week, helps maintain connection with mentors and peers.

By the time learners have completed and published their dissertations, they will be independent doctoral researchers who regularly build on a foundation of theory and experience that contributes to their fields. Until that final milestone, though, learners must continue to practice and apply their study skills and critical thinking. To support their own success in the dissertation, learners must

- Fully understand all that is required in the PhD degree process.
- Understand the requirements of the dissertation manuscript itself.
- Fully engage the dissertation courseroom.
- Remain in frequent contact with their mentor and advisor.
- Make full use of the resources available to further their work in dissertation. The next chapter outlines some of these resources.
CHAPTER 7. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The dissertation courseroom and iGuide contain a wealth of helpful resources, described below.

School-specific Materials

Available on iGuide at Doctoral Resources & Support.

Doctoral Advisors

Doctoral Advisors provide advanced doctoral learners with direction in completing their dissertations and navigating challenges along the way. The best way for learners and mentors to contact the Doctoral Advising team or an individual advisor is by emailing doctoral@capella.edu. Learners and mentors may also phone 1-888-CAPELLA (1-888-227-3552) option 2. Learners should be prepared to schedule an appointment outside of quarter start to address complex issues. While advisors work hard to be responsive, they are not always able to provide an immediate response.

APA

Familiarity with the Publications Manual of the American Psychological Association (6th edition), typically referred to as APA or APA 6, is assumed. Learners must purchase their own copy of APA 6, which is widely available.

APA’s Style blog addresses specific elements of APA formatting. The tone of the style blog is more informal than the manual but no less rigorous in its requirements. Available at APA Style.

Dissertation Format Guidelines

The dissertation manuscript is a permanent document that reflects on the writer, the school, and the university. To that end, the Dissertation Format Guidelines details document specifics (margins, table formatting, reference list presentation, for example) as well as content elements related to APA requirements (protecting confidentiality of participants and research sites, proper crediting of outside work, for example). Available on iGuide at Doctoral Publications: Formatting Guidelines.
Dissertation Templates, Chapter Guides, and Rubrics

Dissertation Templates, Chapter Guides, Rubrics assist PhD learners in understanding the requirements for excellence in scholarly research, including intellectual creativity, standards of scientific rigor, merit, and the ethical conduct of research.

- The Quantitative and Qualitative Dissertation Templates include all required headings and subheadings for each chapter in the dissertation document and can be found on each school’s resource page. The Doctoral Publications: Formatting Guidelines also should be used in conjunction with the writing template.
- The Quantitative and Qualitative Dissertation Chapter Guides are annotated templates, with text explaining the required content in each section, along with tips and suggestions for completing that section.
- The Quantitative and Qualitative Dissertation Rubrics are aligned with the templates and chapter guides and provide a tool for learners to conduct a self-assessment prior to submission to mentor and committee, and for mentors and committee members to evaluate the quality of the dissertation.

Doctoral Success Program

The Doctoral Success Program provides as-needed interventions that align with learners’ unique requirements and that support learner development and growth into independent scholar-practitioners.

General FAQs

The Doctoral Support FAQs are a searchable, ever-growing bank of frequently asked questions. Available on iGuide at Doctoral Support FAQs.

Glossary of Research Terms

Two distinct glossaries—one for quantitative research and one for qualitative research—supplemented with flash cards and a quiz, encourage learners to refresh or test their knowledge of basic research vocabulary. Available on iGuide at Glossary of Research Terms.
IRB Resources

Detailed information for designing an ethical study, conducting ethical research, and navigating the IRB process are available on iGuide at Institutional Review Board.

Library

The Capella University Library has a huge database of journal subscriptions, e-books, and dissertations, along with access to the Interlibrary Loan service. The library's knowledgeable staff are on call for search strategy discussions and discipline-specific consultations. Available on iGuide at Library.

Quantitative Skills Center

The Quantitative Skills Center provides resources and live support for learners in math, statistics, and other quantitative skill areas. Quantitative skills include the ability to manipulate numbers and reason using numbers. Strengthening these skills will boost your research, problem-solving, decision-making, and critical thinking skills in school and in the workplace. Available on iGuide at Quantitative Skills Center.

Smarthinking

Smarthinking, a web-based tutoring service, offers you free online tutoring and custom critique of your papers. You will receive 168 minutes to use toward tutoring each quarter.

Tutoring can help you:

- Improve statistical analysis skills
- Improve your writing
- Polish your academic skills

Available on iGuide, on the Smarthinking page.

Turnitin

Turnitin is a text-matching software platform that scans submitted papers for instances of potential plagiarism. Schools, programs, and instructors may have specific requirements regarding learners’ use of Turnitin. Available on iGuide at Turnitin.
Common plagiarism errors are discussed in a Turnitin white paper, *The Plagiarism Spectrum: Instructor Insights Into the 10 Types of Plagiarism*. Available through the [Turnitin website](https://www.turnitin.com).

**Writing and Revising Toolkit**

This suite of resources supports learners throughout the writing process. Dissertation writers can use these handouts in conjunction with the *Dissertation Format Guidelines* and the dissertation writing template. Available on iGuide at [Writing, Revising, and Format Editing Review](https://www.turnitin.com) under [Revisions Toolbox](https://www.turnitin.com).