USE OF THIRD-PARTY SERVICES IN DISSERTATION AND DOCTORAL CAPSTONE RESEARCH

Capella University is committed to ensuring academic integrity within the doctoral research process. Dissertation and doctoral capstone researchers are responsible for ensuring that they have conducted their own research and completed their own data analysis, and that their dissertation or doctoral capstone is their own work. Doctoral researchers must strictly comply with University Policies 3.01.01 and 3.03.06, and nothing in this document replaces or alters those policies. This document provides examples of ways in which third party services of all types may and may not be used within the doctoral process. Except as expressly set forth in this document, doctoral researchers must not use third-party services for any purpose. This includes services from any individuals other than those designated for the support of Capella's dissertation and doctoral capstone learners such as mentors, committee members, librarians, tutors, and Writing Center staff. Learners who violate these guidelines will be subject to disciplinary procedures outlined in the research misconduct policy. Exceptions to these guidelines may be granted by the Dean in cases in which a learner has a disability accommodation on file.

I. Use of Third Parties (i.e. Editors, Writing Coaches, Consultants) for Writing and Editing Support for the Dissertation or Doctoral Capstone

A. Doctoral Researcher Responsibilities (Prohibited Third-party Activities)
   1) Writing the dissertation or doctoral capstone as well as all research plans, proposals, or other materials leading up to the final deliverable.
   2) Organizing thoughts and ideas (presenting theoretical framework perspective, methodology, etc.).
   3) Making revisions recommended by the mentor, committee, or school or university reviewers.
   4) Interpreting and refining the manuscript’s data, analysis, and findings.
   5) Using school-approved dissertation and doctoral capstone templates.
   6) Fact-checking the dissertation or doctoral capstone.
   7) Removing or remedying plagiarism.
   8) Updating references and attribution.
   9) Obtaining copyrights for the dissertation or doctoral capstone.

B. Allowable Third-party Activities
   1) Making suggestions for the doctoral researcher to improve the manuscript in the areas of organization, structure, and/or style.
   2) Copyediting the dissertation or doctoral capstone defined as correcting grammar and mechanics usage, and application of APA formatting.
   3) Correcting the format of the written material to align it with Capella’s prescribed style.
   4) Correcting labeling and design of tables and figures.
   5) Ensuring correct page numbering.

¹ The university does not recommend or endorse third party services for dissertation or doctoral capstone. Learners who use third party services do so at their own risk; The university does not ensure the quality of such services, and there is no guarantee that use of such services will result in the successful completion of a dissertation or doctoral capstone milestone. Learners should consult their mentor when considering use of such services.
6) Reviewing for continuity.

II. Use of Third Parties to Assist in the Research

A. Doctoral Researcher Responsibilities (Prohibited Third-party Activities)
   1) Collecting the raw data, unless the data consist of archival or “secondary” records or is collected through a survey panel.
   2) Conducting the literature review.

B. Allowable Third-party Activities
   1) Activities documented in a school-approved research plan or proposal.
   2) Administrative activities undertaken by a site to accommodate the research (such as facilities set up, distribution of recruitment invitations or de-identification of existing data) in accordance with a school-approved research plan.

III. Use of Third Parties for Statistical Analysis or Consultation

A. Doctoral Researcher Responsibilities (Prohibited Third-party Activities)
   1) Making an initial examination of the raw data.
   2) Entering the data and preparing it for analysis.
   3) Choosing and applying statistical analysis and other analytic procedures to the data.
   4) Producing tables, charts, graphs and other findings.
   5) Explaining the selected statistical analysis or analytic procedures and interpreting the results.
   6) Writing up the results for use in the dissertation or doctoral capstone.
   7) Interpreting the findings.

B. Allowable Third-party Activities
   1) Consulting with the doctoral researcher on the choice of statistics, interpretation of findings, and report formats.
   2) Reviewing and validating the doctoral researcher’s inputted data and completed statistical analysis for accuracy.

IV. Use of Third Parties for Transcription

A. Doctoral Researcher Responsibilities (Prohibited Third-party Activities)
   1) Re-organizing or highlighting the transcripts.
   2) Analyzing or interpreting the transcripts.

B. Allowable Third Party Activities
   1) Providing a word-for-word (i.e. verbatim) transcript of the recorded study data.

2 Use of a third party to assist in the research, if allowed and documented in a school-approved research plan or proposal, should be disclosed in chapter 3 of the dissertation or in the doctoral capstone final report.

3 Allowable Third Party Activities: Doctoral Learners in the School of Education are prohibited from using third-party assistance in their dissertation or doctoral capstone research for administrative activities described under II.B and III.B.2.