



Marriage and Family Therapy  
Doctoral and Dissertation Handbook

Mount Mercy University  
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# Contents

Chapter 1: Ph.D. Program Mission & Goals .....	4
Ph.D. Program Objectives (POs) .....	4
Ph.D. Student Learning Objectives (SLOs): .....	5
Chapter 2: Progression & Requirements for Ph.D. Program .....	5
MFT Course Requirements-Ph.D. ....	5
The PhD is a 60-credit hour program. Credit Hours are broken up as described below.....	5
Core Program -21 Credit Hours.....	5
MMU MFT Core Program Course Descriptions.....	6
Doctoral Internship.....	7
Dissertation/Capstone Project .....	7
Specializations – 15 Credit Hours .....	7
MFT PHD Program Outcomes Mapping .....	8
Chapter 3: Ph.D. Student Learning Assessments .....	10
1. Individual Course Assessment: .....	10
2. Specialization .....	10
3. Program:.....	10
Chapter 4: Ph.D. Clinical Experience .....	11
Hours: .....	11
Program of Study .....	12
Suggested Schedules of Courses.....	13
Chapter 5: Dissertation/Capstone Project .....	14
Introduction.....	14
Dissertation Committee .....	15
Procedures for approval of non-core Faculty Committee Members .....	15
Changes in Committee membership .....	15
Role of the Dissertation Committee Chairperson. ....	15
Role of Dissertation Committee Members:.....	15
Dissertation Proposal.....	16
Proposal Review and Approval.....	16
Guidelines for Creating the Dissertation Proposal .....	17
Chapter Organization .....	19
Chapter 1 – Introduction and Statement of the Problem* .....	19

Chapter 2 – Literature Review .....	19
Chapter 3 – Method.....	19
Chapter 4 – Results .....	19
Chapter 5 – Discussion.....	19
FORMS AND APPENDICES .....	20
FORM 1 .....	21
MOUNT MERCY PH. D DISSERTATION COMMITTEE CHAIR/MEMBER AGREEMENT.....	21
FORM 2 .....	22
MOUNT MERCY PH. D APPLICATION FOR NON-MOUNT MERCY FACULTY DISSERTATION COMMITTEE MEMBER.....	22
FORM 3 .....	23
MOUNT MERCY PH. D DISSERTATION COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP CHANGE.....	23
Form 4.....	24
Dissertation Proposal Approval Form.....	24
Form 5.....	25
Dissertation Final Approval Form .....	25
Appendix A: Dissertation Formatting Guide .....	26

## Chapter 1: Ph.D. Program Mission & Goals

The MFT doctoral program is a unique program offering one of a kind specializations within a curriculum designed to enhance the theoretical knowledge and advanced practice of MFT. The program is designed to resemble the old-fashioned apprentice model, where individuals are able to work alongside of a master craftsman to be nurtured and mentored to improve their talents and skills. Specializations in working with couples, developing and enhancing business and leadership skills and integrating psychophysiological knowledge and interventions provide students with a one of a kind learning experience.

### Ph.D. Program Objectives (POs)

1. Enable students to apply advanced clinical skills in marriage and family therapy.
  - All 4 of the University Objectives can be related to this program objective. It requires **Reflective Judgment** in order to find pathways of intervention that will enable individuals, couples and families to improve/enhance/change their patterns of interaction in such a way that they build up one another rather than tear down. **Strategic communication** is critical for therapy as well as leadership. The desire, skills, and sacrifice required to be available to people who suffer from relationship problems and/or mental health problems are the epitome of **servicing the common good**. To elect a profession that has at its core serving others and dedicating time, energy and money to the development of skills and knowledge to continue to do so in a better and more effective manner would be an excellent representation of **purposeful living**.
2. Facilitate students' ability to solve problems by applying acquired knowledge and techniques in innovative ways.
  - This objective is designed to meet with the University objectives of **Reflective Judgment and Strategic Communication**.
3. Develop students' ability to compile and synthesize information and systemic patterns in ways that lead to alternative solutions and improved outcomes.
  - This objective is designed to meet University objectives of **Purposeful Living and Strategic Communication**.

## Ph.D. Student Learning Objectives (SLOs):

1. Students' will make use of previously acquired knowledge and skills in more integrative and unique ways to resolve clinical problems presented by clients seeking individual, couple and family therapy.
2. Students' will demonstrate an understanding of facts and ideas in their respective specialization and explain how these facts and ideas inform and change the practice and application of MFT services and benefits.
3. Students' will create a dissertation or other project that will elaborate, improve, or theorize original or modified patterns or knowledge related to MFT practice, integration or leadership.

Students will acquire and model systems of cooperation and collaboration that extend the understanding of therapy beyond and outside of the therapy setting.

## Chapter 2: Progression & Requirements for Ph.D. Program

### MFT Course Requirements-Ph.D.

The PhD is a 60-credit hour program. Credit Hours are broken up as described below.

#### Core Program -21 Credit Hours.

- Advanced Research Methods I.
- Advanced Research Methods II.
- Complex Systems in Couples and Family Therapy.
- Advanced Models of Couples Therapy.
- Meditation and Spirituality as Processes for Growth in Human Self-discovery.
- Advanced Family Therapy.
- Advanced Philosophical and Ethical Principles in MFT.

**Note: All students are required to achieve a minimum GPA of 3.0. Only two C grades are permitted in the doctoral program. A third grade of C or below will result in suspension or dismissal from the program. No Core Courses (see Program of Study below) can be accepted with a grade below 80%. A student receiving a C+, C-, or C may repeat a doctoral course once. A maximum of two courses may be repeated. Any grade below a C- (70%) is grounds for dismissal from the program. Additionally, students have a maximum of six years from the entrance date to complete the program and graduate**

## MMU MFT Core Program Course Descriptions

*Advanced Research Methods I:* This course will introduce students to basic research methods in the social sciences. If a student has not had a graduate research methods course, supplemental reading will be expected. Students will be able to access, read, and interpret research articles in primary counseling journals in order to evaluate evidence based best practices in counseling and therapy. In addition, students will learn the basics of statistical procedures and multiple research methodologies including quantitative and qualitative. Students will be able to design and interpret a basic research study. (3 credit hours, however credits will not be awarded until satisfactory completion of both courses.)

*Advanced Research Methods II:* (Prerequisite Advanced Research Methods I.) In this course students will move from a basic understanding of research to full implementation and analysis. Students will design, interpret and complete an independent research project that was conceptualized in the first research course. Student will be required to select modality, create hypothesis or statement of problem, choose statistical or qualitative methodology appropriate to the project as well as demonstrate knowledge of alternative methods and research principles. (3 credit hours awarded upon completion of both courses.)

*Complex systems in Couples and Family Therapy:* This course will focus on the application of complex 2<sup>nd</sup> order cybernetics to the process and procedure of couples and family therapy. Students will become competent in observing, interpreting and analyzing interactional patterns in distressed couples and families with the goal of applying interventions and applying the results to effectively aid couples and families in restoring or creating healthy behaviors and quality relationships. (3 credit hours)

*Advanced Models of Couples Therapy:* This course will deepen students understanding of traditional MFT models of therapy and integrate post-modern and empirically verified models of MFT. Students will have opportunities to explore and apply these additional theories to actual couples' situations, develop innovative interventions for use in couple's therapy and work to provide ways and means of integrating different theories for more effective therapy. (3 credit hours)

*Meditation and Spirituality as Processes for Growth in Human self-discovery:* This course will provide students with philosophical and practical understanding of the integration and use of spiritual and meditative techniques in their own development and to assist clients in their development. Students will be exposed to a variety of philosophical concepts and systems that support the role of spiritual/mystical experience in human growth. Students will also have the opportunity to have hands on experiences in a variety of meditative and spiritual disciplines for their own growth and to learn how they might be applied to their clients. (3 credit hours)

*Advanced Family Therapy:* Students in this course will learn to integrate multiple family therapy theories to affect more efficient and workable interventions. Students will learn to draw from and integrate both modern traditional theories and post-modern theories. The emphasis of the course will be on application and outcome in the actual use of the principles and theories. (3 credit hours)

*Advanced Philosophical and Ethical Principles in MFT:* This course will enable students to understand more fully the foundations in human systems of thought how ethics inform our life choices, relationships and professional principles. Students will analyze professional ethics in relation to foundational principles. They will also apply MFT professional ethics to complex dilemmas encountered in couples and family therapy and in supervision of trainees and supervisees. (3 credit hours)

### Doctoral Internship – 12 Credit Hours

Four credit hours' times three for total of 12 hours. Students will participate in a full, one-year internship in which they will be expected to provide clinical services to clients using the skills and knowledge learned in the program. Students will be mentored throughout the internship by the specialist faculty in their area of specialization. The internship will include specific material and products related to each students' chosen specialization and designed in close consultation with the instructor.

### Dissertation/Capstone Project – 12 Credit Hours

Four credit hours' times three for a total of 12 hours. Students will, in consultation with their specialization mentor, design and complete a dissertation or Capstone Project that will demonstrate their expertise and knowledge as related to their area of specialization. This may include original research, application of knowledge or skills, theoretical implications or other creative endeavor intended to expand and increase our knowledge of the topic. For more guidance please see Chapters

### Specializations – 15 Credit Hours

MMU offers 3 specializations within the MFT doctoral program. The areas are Leadership and Business in MFT, Advanced Clinical work with Couples, and Neuroscience and Psychophysiological Interventions in MFT. Students will take a total of 12 credit hours in their area of specialization and an additional 3 hours in one of the other areas.

## MFT PHD Program Outcomes Mapping

	<b>PO 1</b> <b>Enable students to apply advanced clinical skills in MFT</b>	<b>PO 2</b> <b>Facilitate ability to solve problems by application of acquired knowledge and techniques in innovative ways</b>	<b>PO 3</b> <b>Develop ability to compile and synthesize information and systemic patterns leading to alternative solutions and improved outcomes.</b>
Advanced Research Methods I	SLO 1,2	X	X
Advanced Research Methods II	SLO 1,2	X	X
Complex systems in Couples and Family Therapy	X SLO 2		X
Advanced Models of Couples Therapy	X SLO 1,2		X
Meditation and Spirituality as Processes for Growth in Human self-discovery	SLO 3	X	
Advanced Family Therapy	X SLO 1,2		X
Philosophical and Ethical Principles in MFT	X SLO 2		
Marketing in MFT	SLO 2,3	X	
Science of Leadership:	SLO 2,3	X	X
Strategic Human Resource Management	SLO 2,3	X	

The Business of MFT	SLO 2,3	X	X
Communication Processes in Couples	X SLO 1,2,3		X
The Couple Life Cycle	X SLO 1,2,3		X
Attachment and Differentiation in Couple Therapy	X SLO 1,2,3		X
Couples in Crisis	X SLO 1,2,3		X
Complementary and Alternative Healthcare	X SLO 2,3	X	X
Neuroscience and Emotional Regulation	X SLO 2,3	X	
Neurophysiological Essentials for Treatment	X SLO 1,3	X	
Principles and Application of Neurofeedback:	X SLO 2,3	X	
Internship (12 credit hours)	X SLO 1		
Dissertation/Capstone Project (12 credit hours)	X SLO 3	X	X

**Note: X denotes the Program Outcomes that each course is designed to fulfill. Student Learning Outcomes (SLO) are assigned to specific courses and will be used in assessing student outcomes.**

## Chapter 3: Ph.D. Student Learning Assessments

Assessment will occur at 3 different levels: individual course, specialization and program.

1. **Individual Course Assessment:** Is determined by the instructor and may include any of the following: objective tests, papers, research, projects or social service application, demonstration.
2. **Specialization:** Assessment of each specialization will be defined by the specialization director. This will include rubrics establishing landmarks in the expected development of skills and knowledge as well as the integration of specialized skills and knowledge into the larger category of Advanced Marriage and Family Therapy. The rubrics may be related to a capstone project or product, a comprehensive examination, or a collaborative project with one of the other specializations. It is anticipated that specialization assessment will serve as the transition point to dissertation/final project.
3. **Program:** Assessment will take place in the defense and approval of the dissertation/final project. Completion of the dissertation and fulfillment of internship hours will serve as the final evaluation of the students' performance and the final step in completion and graduation. The dissertation defense or final project presentation will be a public event with the evaluation being accomplished by the dissertation/project committee, dissertation/project mentor and program director.

### **How will assessment findings be used to improve student learning:**

The assessment of students and program will be integrated into the MFT department's existing review process. This consists of 2 annual meetings where all collected data from the various assessment instruments are collated, discussed and evaluated in relation to the program objectives, the faculty objectives and the student learning objectives. The first meeting is held at the conclusion of the academic year (May) to review how the program performed over the course of the previous year as related to modified goals and objectives that may have been created during the second meeting which is held just prior to the start of a new academic year (August).

## Chapter 4: Ph.D. Clinical Experience

The Clinical Internship for students in the doctoral program will consist of providing therapy in independent off-site work will be dependent on the placement and the credentials of the individual student. If the program or student has concerns regarding independent therapy work, student or program may petition for on-site work at the Olson MFT Clinic, until those concerns are addressed. Students who are fully licensed as independent mental health care providers will have more flexibility than those who are not yet licensed.

### Hours:

All doctoral students will need to accumulate:

- a minimum of 500 direct client contact hours
- 100 hours of supervision and

Evaluation of outcomes related to the clinical experience will be through ongoing face-to-face meetings with the supervisor/mentor to review the written contract that they mutually approved at the beginning of the internship. A final comprehensive face-to-face review will occur at the conclusion of the internship experience. Mentors may invite others to participate in the reviews in consultation with the mentee to enhance and deepen the learning.

## Program of Study

Courses	Credit Hours
<b>Core Doctoral Courses Required for Practicum</b>	
MF 704 Advanced Family Systems	3
MF 718 Advanced Models of Family and Therapy	3
MF 719 Advanced Ethical and Professional Issues in MFT	3
MF 740 Advanced Research Methods I	3
MF 840 Advanced Research Methods II	3
MF 755 Advanced Spirituality	3
MF 782 Adv. Models of Couples Therapy	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>21 Hours</b>
<b>Elective Courses (12 credit specialization &amp; 3 credit in other area)</b>	
<b>Neuroscience</b>	
MF 841 Neuroscience and Emotion Regulation	3
MF 805 Neuro Essentials	3
MF 844 Principles of Neurofeedback	3
MF 843 Complementary and Alternative HealthCare	3
<b>Advanced Couples Therapy</b>	
MF 820 Communication Processes in Couples	3
MF 822 Couples Attachment	3
MF 823 Couples in Crisis	3
MF 821 Couples Life Cycle	3
<b>Leadership and Business</b>	
MF 777 Adv. Entrepreneurship and Marketing	3
MF 750 Leadership in MFT	3
MF 800 Strategic HR (BN600)	3
MF 835 Leadership Foundation (BN635)	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>15 Hours</b>
<b>Clinical Courses</b>	
MF 890 Doctoral Internship	4
MF 891 Doctoral Internship	4
MF 892 Doctoral Internship	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>12 Hours</b>
<b>Dissertation/Capstone Project</b>	
MF 895 Dissertation	4
MF 896 Dissertation Continuation (take 1-4 credit per block)	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>12 Hours</b>
<b>Total Program Requirement</b>	
	<b>60 Hours</b>

**Note: All students are required to achieve a minimum GPA of 3.0. Only two C grades are permitted in the doctoral program. A third grade of C or below will result in suspension or dismissal from the program. No Core Courses (see above) can be accepted with a grade below 80%. A student receiving a C+, C-, or C may repeat a doctoral course once. A maximum of two courses may be repeated. Any grade below a C- (70%) is grounds for dismissal from the program. Additionally, students have a maximum of six years from the entrance date to complete the program and graduate**

## Suggested Schedules of Courses

Suggested Program of Study Schedule		
Year One	Year Two	Year Three
<b>Block 1-2 Aug-Nov</b>	<b>Block 1-2 Aug-Nov</b>	<b>Block 1-2 Aug-Nov</b>
MF 704 Adv. Family Systems (M)	MF 718 Adv. Models of MFT (T)	MF 895 Dissertation
MF 740 Adv. Research Methods I (T)		
MF 890 Doctoral Internship*		
<b>Block 3 Nov-Dec</b>	<b>Block 3 Nov-Dec</b>	<b>Block 3 Nov-Dec</b>
MF 719 Adv. Ethics Issues (M/W)	Elective	
<b>Block 4 Jan-Feb</b>	<b>Block 4 Jan-Feb</b>	<b>Block 4 Jan-Feb</b>
MF 755 Adv. Spirituality (M)	Elective	
<b>Block 5-6 Feb-April</b>	<b>Block 5-6 Feb-April</b>	<b>Block 5-6 Feb-April</b>
MF 840 Adv. Research Methods II	Elective	MF 896 Dissertation Continuation
MF 891 Doctoral Internship*		
<b>Block 7 April-May</b>	<b>Block 7 April-May</b>	<b>Block 7 April-May</b>
Elective	Elective	
<b>Block 8-9 June-Aug</b>	<b>Block 8-9 June-Aug</b>	<b>Block 8-9 June-Aug</b>
MF 782 Adv. Models of Couples (T)	Elective	MF 896 Dissertation Continuation
MF 892 Doctoral Internship*		

\* MFT 892 Doctoral Internship can be taken in year one or year two.

# Chapter 5: Dissertation/Capstone Project

## Introduction

The primary purpose of the dissertation is to produce an original, impactful contribution to the field of marriage and family therapy. Completed dissertations reflect an integration of practice and scholarship, are of publishable quality, and demonstrate competence in evaluating the literature and practice in a chosen area of specialization. Topics must be related to the field of marital and family therapy. In keeping with program objectives and values, topics addressing multicultural diversity and multinational issues are strongly encouraged.

Students are assisted and directed by two separate structures, two advanced research methods courses and the dissertation committee, particularly the chairperson. The dissertation committee chairperson has the responsibility for guiding and directing the dissertation. Therefore, it is important to involve the faculty chairperson early in its development. Committee members provide a supportive, less extensive role. See following sections for more detail on the role of committee chairs and members.

Students are sometimes confused about the extent to which this is an independent process and how that relates to the student-committee relationship in determining the scope, content, and quality of the dissertation. Though it is largely an independent process, faculty are responsible for providing support and direction and are responsible for the overall quality of the dissertation. This means that everything from topic selection to design of the project is determined by faculty members of the committee, particularly the chair. Students can expect to meet frequently with their chairperson in developing the dissertation and to review multiple drafts. Frequency of contacts, whether by person, by e-mail, or phone should be negotiated directly with the chairperson. Similarly, both faculty members and student should specify turnaround time for reading drafts. **At least two weeks are generally needed for reading drafts of the dissertation**; both parties should specifically note exceptions for either time.

*Dissertation Type(s):* PhD students may complete dissertations that encourages quantitative or qualitative dissertations or some combination of the two. The following list provides examples of some of the research designs to consider. For more information consult research methodology texts.

### Descriptive

Grounded Theory	Phenomenology
Correlational	Formal Case Studies (Sprenkle)
Causal-comparative	Single-case Designs
Quasi-experimental	Experimental
Program evaluation	Meta-analytic literature reviews
Experimental Designs	Structured Observation Ethnography

Students may complete a clinical project or theoretical work for their dissertation. Dissertations completed under this category must adhere to the same standards of academic rigor and excellence as quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-methods dissertations. These projects must also be relevant to the theory and practice of marriage and family therapy.

## Dissertation Committee

The dissertation committee consists of a minimum of three members. The chair and at least one member of the committee must be full-time members of the MFT Core Faculty. **ADD REFERENCE TO FORM IN APPENDICES** for obtaining approval of the dissertation committee.

**Procedures for approval of non-core Faculty Committee Members.** Non-Core Faculty Committee Members must a) hold an earned doctorate in psychology, MFT, or a field pertinent to the dissertation topic, and b) have demonstrated competence in the topic area. Application for non-core Faculty Committee members must be approved by the Committee Chair and Program Director. Application is made by filing the appropriate form **ADD REFERENCE TO FORM IN APPENDICES** a statement of rationale for membership, and a vita of the proposed member.

*Non-Eligibility.* The following examples involve relationships which would make an individual ineligible for Committee membership because of possible conflict of interest: a) personal therapist of Candidate

- b) business associates, employees, employers of Candidate, c) co-psychological assistants of the Candidate reporting to the same employer, d) relatives of the Candidate, and/or e) graduates of CSPP/Alliant- within the past three years.

**Changes in Committee membership:** On rare occasions a chair or member may be changed. To provide continuity of guidance, such changes should be made only when unavoidable. **ADD REFERENCE TO FORM IN APPENDICES** which is completed and submitted to department chair for approval and guidance.

**Role of the Dissertation Committee Chairperson.** The chair is responsible for supervising the scope and design of the research, the development of the written proposal, the conduct of the research, and the preparation of the final document. In doing so, the chair asserts that the dissertation is academically sound, is clearly and correctly written, and provides an original contribution to the field.

The chair is also responsible for ensuring that the student follows both professional and University guidelines for the protection of human subjects and that he or she obtains necessary permission to conduct the research before initiating subject/participant recruitment and data collection, e.g. prior to the proposal meeting.

The chair must approve the proposal and final document before the student distributes copies to the committee and before the committee can meet formally. Thus, the chair must attest that the dissertation is ready for defense before a date for the defense can be set.

The chair is not an editor. The student has the responsibility of editing the document so that it complies with the appropriate format and is written in Standard American English. A professional editor may be necessary and should be involved as early as the proposal phase of writing the dissertation. *The chair is responsible for assuring that the document meets these requirements before it is approved for submission and may recommend or require that the student use an editor.*

**Role of Dissertation Committee Members:** Committee members are responsible for meeting with the student individually and as a group. Individual meetings generally discuss selected aspects of the work. Committee members are committed to approving the student's dissertation proposal and attending a final oral defense. Although members may consult on various portions of the dissertation, their role is considerably less extensive than that of the chair. They are responsible, however, for reading and critiquing preliminary versions of the proposal and dissertation and providing a pass or fail evaluation of the dissertation proposal and defense.

## Dissertation Proposal

Under the guidance of their chairperson, students must prepare a dissertation proposal. The required components of the proposal include:

- A clear and detailed description of the issues, question, or problem to be addressed.
- A focused, scholarly review of the relevant literature that provides a rationale for the significance of the issues, question, or problem addressed.
- A discussion of study methodology.

For most dissertations types, the information included in the proposal constitutes the first two or three chapters of the dissertation, which is essentially all the material up to the actual collection of data and analysis. See following section on manuscript format.

**Students must not collect data prior to satisfactory completion of the proposal meeting and approval of the proposal, as well as approval by the IRB.** If a pilot study is to collect data for some aspect of the study, approval by the committee and IRB must be obtained. IRB approval can be obtained either before or after the proposal meeting.

**Proposal Review and Approval:** Students must receive approval of their dissertation proposal from their committee. Approval of the dissertation proposal will be granted following a collaborative review process. This review process may include in-person meetings to and is intended to:

- Ensure the feasibility of the proposed study/project.
- Answer any questions that are unclear from the written proposal.
- Discuss any potential difficulties regarding the conduct of the proposed research and suggest alternatives if needed.
- Clarify any issues regarding procedural details, rationales for selection of methodology, instrumentation, subject/participant pool and so forth in order to facilitate the completion of the proposed study.

**The student is expected to be able to answer questions about all aspects of the proposal and must demonstrate understanding of the literature, methodology, and any statistical procedures or analyses that might be involved in the study.** The proposal document is a 'finished' document appropriately formatted and edited.

When the document is satisfactory and requires no substantive modifications and/or additions, the chairperson and other committee member(s) will sign the Dissertation Proposal Approval Form. Prior to proposal approval, the student will work primarily with the dissertation chairperson to develop and refine the proposal.

Approval of the dissertation proposal constitutes an agreement between the student and dissertation committee. In effect, the committee agrees that conducting and analyzing the research *as proposed and approved* will yield a database suitable for dissertation level research. Acceptance of the proposal, however, does not guarantee the acceptability of the finished dissertation.

Minor changes in procedure, design, or analysis may sometimes be necessary after the actual study has begun. If these changes are minimal (for example, a slight change in instructions), then the chair alone can approve them. If major changes are necessary (reduction in sample size, change in design, etc.), then student should first secure the chair's approval and then discuss the changes with the committee. It is important to secure the full committee's endorsement of major changes in writing, either with or without a committee meeting.

## Guidelines for Creating the Dissertation Proposal

The following is a *general* guide to designing and writing the research project proposal. The suggested elements will be covered in most proposals, although there may be some variation depending on the specific nature of the proposed project. The outline presupposes an empirical study (quantitative or qualitative). The outline of a proposal for a theoretical paper or treatment manual would necessarily be somewhat different.

Although many elements of the proposal will also be incorporated in the final version of dissertation, requirements for the proposal itself are different, and hence not all elements of the proposal will necessarily be included in the final version. The proposal must conform to APA style requirements. See the section on requirements for writing the final paper and the *APC Style Manual* for additional information about style requirements. As appropriate to the methodology employed, research project proposals will typically include the following sections:

### Cover Page

The cover page should include the title of the research project, your name, Mount Mercy University, the date the proposal is submitted, the name of the committee chair and his or her degree, and the names of the other members of the committee and their degrees.

**Introduction to the problem.** State as succinctly as possible the nature of the problem or question you will address in your research project, why you consider it important, and how you propose to address the problem and answer the question.

**Background and Literature Review.** Review existing peer reviewed literature as it bears on the topic for this study. Demonstrate the logical continuity between previous and present work. Controversial issues should be laid out clearly and treated fairly. This section must not be a disjointed list of published studies presented without interpretation or comment. Rather, present an integrated statement which makes clear why and how the studies cited are related to your proposal; through the literature being cited being mindful that your opinions do not belong in the literature review. The literature review must be extensive enough to clearly define the question(s) being asked. Those questions and the method for investigation need to be adequately nested within the existing research literature such that the reader of the proposal can follow the flow of ideas from existing literature through relevant questions or issues needing to be addressed and ending with an adequate methodology. Clearly integrate other relevant information about instruments to be used, the setting in which the research is to be conducted, and other contextual factors impacting the proposed study.

**Rationale.** After the problem has been introduced and the background laid out, you are able to formally present the proposed study. Clearly state what you intend to do, why you are doing it, how you intend to do it, and what you expect to find out. Clearly state what the research question is. If hypotheses are appropriate, they should be listed in a separate paragraph in this section. This section may vary somewhat depending on the research question and the methodology employed. Usually, these issues are best addressed in the closing paragraphs of the introduction.

**Method.** Describe and justify the general approach proposed to answer the research question (e.g., experimental study, correlational research, qualitative research, case study, historical inquiry, philosophical analysis, etc.). The methodology needs to be clearly informed by the existing research and adequately address and reflect the questions being asked.

**Participants or Sample.** Describe the participants in the study and how they will be selected. If archival data are being used, do not imply data are from “participants” in your dissertation.

**Design.** This section should include a description of any variables to be examined in the study and how that will be accomplished. List all of the measures to be used. If existing tests or scales are to be used, evaluate the reliability and validity and justify the selection. If measures are being developed specifically for this study, provide final versions of any such surveys or scales in an appendix. It may be necessary to pre-test such instruments before final approval is given for the proposal.

**Procedure.** Describe how the study will be conducted. This section should be as specific and detailed as possible.

**Data analysis.** Describe how the data will be treated once collected and specify any statistical analyses to be used. Justify the selection of statistical procedures, explaining how they will help to answer the research question.

### **Ethical Issues**

As they apply, describe how the following ethical issues will be addressed in your study. This section will also form the basis for approval by the Chair of the DMFT and the Institutional Review Board. All research projects must conform to the *Ethical Principles of the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy* and to Minnesota Statutes. It is assumed that the student has read and understands these ethical standards and the relevant statutes. All documents relating to ethical treatment of human subjects which will be used in the course of the research must be included in the proposal. These documents include consent forms, cover letters, debriefing protocols, and other relevant material.

**Consent.** All participants must give consent prior to testing and be given the opportunity to withdraw from the study at any time with no adverse consequences (Appendices E & F).

**Risk.** Is there any risk of physical or mental harm or of social discomfort to subjects in this study? Are these risks justified, and what steps are being taken to minimize them?

**Deception.** If there is deception involved in the study, explain clearly why it is necessary, and how the risks involved in deception are outweighed by other considerations.

**Confidentiality.** What steps will be taken to ensure that all information gathered about individuals will remain confidential, and that participant's privacy will be respected. Specify what will be done with the data once the study is completed.

**Information and debriefing.** Participants must be provided a prompt opportunity to find out about the results of the study, and to correct any misconceptions they may have about the study.

**Retention of data.** Data must be kept for 5 years after the date that the dissertation is bound and submitted to the library. The data should be destroyed after that date unless you plan to submit the dissertation for further publication. If you plan to submit the dissertation for publication, APA guidelines indicate that you retain the data for 5 years after the date of publication.

**Permissions.** If copyrighted materials are used in conducting the research, documentation of either purchase or permission to use must be provided. Students must obtain written permission from agencies to use archival data or to collect non-archival data. This written permission should be on the agency's letterhead, be signed by the appropriate authority and the student and contain the necessary elements as indicated in the sample letter (Appendix G).

### **Final manuscript**

Style and Format

**See Appendix A**

The APA Publication Manual is primarily for submitting papers for journal publication, so it lacks guidelines specific to dissertations and doctoral projects. To fill this gap, Mount Mercy has created guidelines for you to follow. This document provides details on those guidelines

## Chapter Organization

The following is a recommended format for the dissertation document, including guides as to number of pages for each chapter. However, chapter organization and length may be modified with the approval of the committee to maximize the coherence, logic, and readability of the document.

### Chapter 1 – Introduction and Statement of the Problem\*

Chapter 1 is an Introduction and Statement of the Problem (approximately 5 to 15 pages). Introduction and statement of the problem starts with a broad general area of interest and then focuses to a highly specific topic. It identifies the need for the study from an applied perspective and its significance. This is also the section where the terms used in the study are defined.

### Chapter 2 – Literature Review

This involves a conceptualization of the research question in the context of current theory and practice. This is a focused, scholarly synthesis of the relevant literature specifying and justifying the problem or controversy addressed in the dissertation. Major terms, concepts, and assumptions are often explained. Quotes should be minimal, if used at all. Typically, this discussion is completed in a maximum of 70 pages.

### Chapter 3 – Method

Description of methods used to collect and organize data. The research design and justification should go at the beginning of this chapter. This discussion typically involves 20 or fewer pages.

The order of this chapter should be as follows:

- Research design/type of study
- Participants, sampling, recruitment, including protection of human participants
- Measures and/or instrumentation (e.g., interviews, semi-structured interviews).
- Instruments must include data on reliability and validity or include methods of validation in case of a qualitative design.
- Data collection procedures
- Data analysis/presentation of data
- Limitations.

\*If a student chooses to do a qualitative design like Narrative Inquiry or auto ethnography, the number of chapters and the layout may differ based on the qualitative approach used.

### Chapter 4 – Results

Presentation and analysis of data. The chief goal of this chapter is to provide information relevant to the issues identified in Chapter 1. Typically, this chapter begins with a presentation of the demographics of the participants.

### Chapter 5 – Discussion

Observations and discussion of the implications of the data, relationship with reviewed literature, limitations of the research (methodology, design) implications/recommendations to future research and clinical implications.

**References** – follows final chapter, includes all references cited in the dissertation

**Appendices**

## FORMS AND APPENDICES







# Form 4

## Dissertation Proposal Approval Form

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_

Current phone Number \_\_\_\_\_ Current e-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Title of  
Research Project \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Research Project \_\_\_\_\_  
Committee Chair, degree  
(Print names) \_\_\_\_\_

Second Member, degree \_\_\_\_\_

Third Member (optional), degree \_\_\_\_\_

### **Dissertation Committee Approval**

(Signature indicates final faculty approval of the Proposal)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Committee Chair (signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Committee Member (signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Committee Member (signature) (optional)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



# Appendix A: Dissertation Formatting Guide

YOUR DISSERTATION TITLE GOES HERE IN ALL CAPS  
EITHER SINGLE OR DOUBLE SPACED

by

Center your name here: Jane Lynne Doe

A dissertation submitted in partial  
fulfillment of the requirements for the  
PhD in Marriage and Family Therapy  
at Mount Mercy University

Choose an item.

Choose an item. Supervisor: Associate Professor Jack B. Nimble  
If you have 2 supervisors, 2<sup>nd</sup> one goes here.

Copyright by

Center your name here: JANE LYNNE DOE

2016

All Rights Reserved

**THIS PAGE IS OPTIONAL**

Mount Mercy University  
Cedar Rapids, Iowa

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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Choose an item.

---

This is to certify that the Choose an item. of

Center your name here: Jane Lynne Doe

has been approved by the Examining Committee for  
the Choose an item. requirement for the Choose an item. degree  
in Choose an item. at the Choose an item. graduation.

Choose an item. Committee:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Jack B. Nimble, Choose an item. Supervisor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dissertation committee member's name

To (Prior to your first dissertation deposit, delete this text and type your dedication here. The entire dedication should be single spaced and centered vertically and horizontally on the page. This text may be altered between first and final deposit.)

**THIS PAGE IS OPTIONAL**

Prior to dissertation deposit, delete this text and type your epigraph here. Each line should be centered, single spaced, and the entire text centered vertically.

This text may be altered between first and final deposits.

Type author's name here

Type title of work here

**THIS PAGE IS OPTIONAL**

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Prior to your first dissertation deposit, replace this text with your acknowledgements.

This text should be double spaced and each paragraph should be indented. This text may be altered between first and final deposit.

**THIS PAGE IS OPTIONAL**

## **ABSTRACT**

Prior to your first dissertation deposit, replace this text with the text of your scientific/scholarly abstract. The text of this abstract should be double spaced and each new paragraph should be indented. This text may be altered between first and final deposits.

**This abstract is required for everyone.**

## PUBLIC ABSTRACT

Prior to your first thesis deposit, replace this text with the text of your public abstract.

The text of this abstract should be double spaced and each new paragraph should be indented.

The text may be altered between first and final deposits. **This abstract is required for all thesis/dissertations.**

The public abstract is to be placed at this point in your first and final deposit **and** submitted via [this web form at final deposit](#). This abstract may be up to 250 words and should be written for a non-academic lay audience. In writing your public abstract, avoid jargon and technical language as much as possible.

The ability to communicate research simply and clearly is an important skill when interviewing for faculty positions, as well as for positions in industry and alt-ac sectors. The public abstract helps convey ideas beyond one's immediate academic circle, facilitating communication with colleagues who do different kinds of work and possess different dimensions of training.

Think of your public abstract as your "elevator pitch" or what you might tell someone who asks, "What is your thesis about?" You may only have a few minutes to explain it to them while keeping their attention and using terminology you are sure they will understand without further lengthy explanation.

Another way to think of your public abstract is like the description you would read on the inside of a book cover.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Prior to your first dissertation deposit, place your actual Table of Contents here.

For instructions on how to create your table of contents, please refer to the manuscript construction guidelines.

## LIST OF TABLES

If you have more than one table in your dissertation, you must have a list of tables here. This list should be formatted similar to your table of contents with the tables listed at the left margin and the corresponding page numbers at the right margin, right-aligned.

For instructions on how to create your list of tables, please refer to the manuscript construction guidelines.

## LIST OF FIGURES

If you have more than one figure in your dissertation, you must have a list of figures here. This list should be formatted similar to your table of contents with the figures listed at the left margin and the corresponding page numbers at the right margin, right-aligned.

For instructions on how to create your list of figures, please refer to the manuscript construction guidelines.

## **PREFACE**

Prior to your first deposit, replace this text with the text of your Preface. The Preface should be double spaced and new paragraphs should be indented. This text may be altered between first and final deposits.

**THIS PAGE IS OPTIONAL**

## **THIS SHOULD BE YOUR FIRST MAJOR HEADING**

The body of your dissertation should start here. Note that the page numbers change from Roman Numerals to Arabic at this point. Your page numbers may be located at the upper right hand, lower right hand, or bottom center of the page. In order to change the placement of your page numbers, click on the insert tab at the top of this page, then click on page number, choose top or bottom of page, and click on the location where you wish to place your page numbers.

This template is set up with a 1.5" left margin and 1" for all other margins. If you are NOT going to be binding your thesis and wish to change the left margin to 1", you are free to do so.

