

THE CHICAGO SCHOOL DISSERTATION MANUAL



Chicago, IL | Southern California | Washington, D.C. | Online

**THE CHICAGO SCHOOL OF PROFESSIONAL
PSYCHOLOGY**

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Introduction

This Dissertation Manual is designed to provide the reader with an overview of The Chicago School of Professional Psychology (TCSP) institutional policies and procedures for the completion of doctoral dissertations. It will provide a framework for understanding the expectations of scholarship that reflects the TCSP mission statement and provides guidance to students and TCSP departments about requirements consistent with TCSP's institutional philosophy, while also reflecting the unique learning requirements of each department.

The quality of the dissertation is a reflection of the doctoral student's personal and professional reputation as well as a reflection of their work at TCSP. Doctoral students preparing to embark on the dissertation process are required to read this manual to better understand the philosophy that drives the and go forward and create research that reflects the values of The Chicago School Model of Education. In addition to this manual, students will need to consult their own department dissertation guidelines that outlines requirements and procedures that are specific to that department.

The Chicago School Model of Education: The Engaged Practitioner

The Chicago School Model of Education is rooted in the belief that professional education has advanced far beyond the traditional classroom, research laboratory, and teaching clinic, and that its relevance and potential impact can be found in every part of life, every type of workplace, and every sector of society. It redefines the role of the professional; no longer limited to study and/or practice, the *Engaged Practitioner* is an individual who is an integral part of the community and uses scholarship and a myriad of applications to solve pressing social issues, strengthen families and organizations, and build capacity. The Chicago School Model sets forth a new approach to teaching a particular discipline, an approach grounded in four institutional values: education, innovation, service, and community (see Table 1 and Figure 1); and four learning outcomes: scholarship, diversity, professional behavior, and professional practice (see Table 2).

The principles that underlie The Chicago School's dissertation process will ensure not only professional excellence, but also an aspiration to continually expand the discipline's boundaries and applications, embrace cross-cultural competencies, and engage in reciprocal research projects that seek to solve pressing social issues and achieve lasting improvements in lives and communities.

In summary, The Chicago School has ensured that all students be exposed to the Engaged Practitioner model and that its educational requirements facilitate the acquisition of the key skills necessary to engage in the activities comprising it. While this iterative process begins in school, it should continue throughout the students' careers.

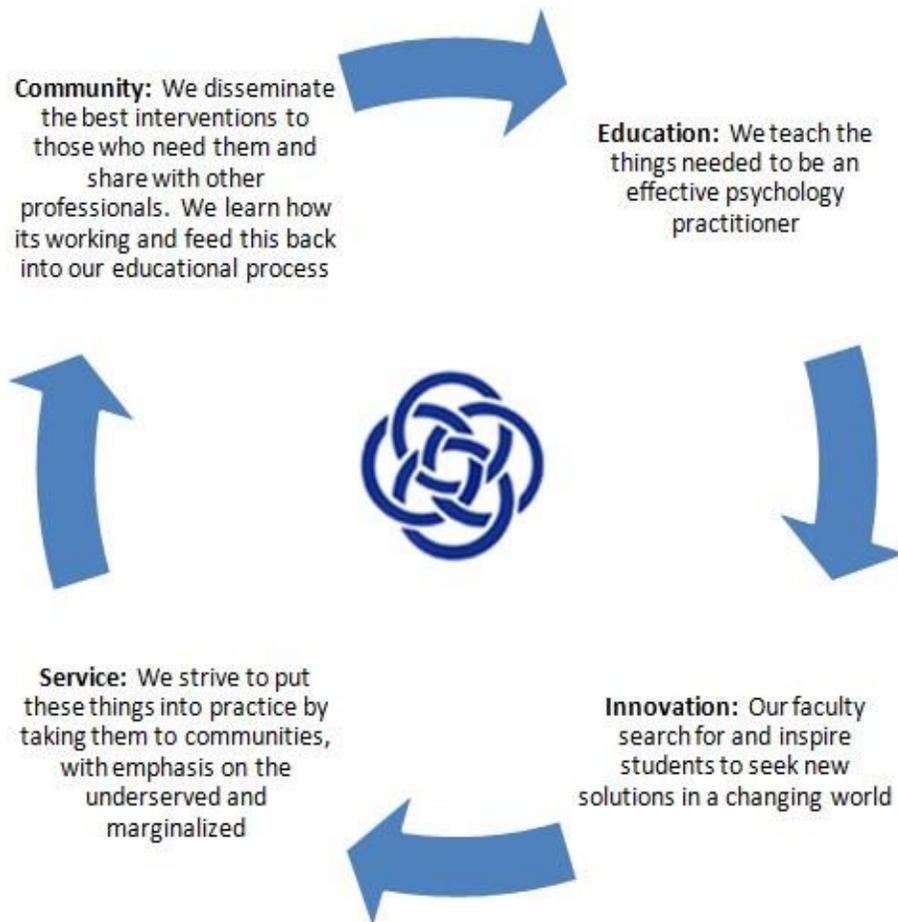
Table 1

The Chicago School Institutional Values

Value	Institutional Assumption
Education	<i>The Chicago School provides a premier education that prepares students to positively impact the world, successfully compete in their careers, and effectively fill market needs. Expanding on the Vail model, the institution has incorporated the learning goals of Diversity and Professional Behavior to stand alongside Professional Practice and Scholarship. The school understands the recursive relation between Professional Practice and Scholarship and promotes a broad definition of evidence-based practice. The school deeply values the incorporation of diversity into all of its programming and remains committed to developing its expertise in this area.</i>
Innovation	<i>Innovation is the means by which a field of study can expand its reach and impact. Likewise, it is the way to identify new ways in which a discipline can help solve pressing social issues. The Chicago School is deeply committed to identify and employ pioneering ways to teach diversity, practice multiculturalism, and have a greater impact in the world. Through modeling and instruction, the school seeks to prepare graduates who are themselves innovators in their chosen fields.</i>
Service	<i>Applied professional experiences provide the opportunity to develop the requisite knowledge, skills, and attitudes in order to meet the needs of the people ultimately being served. The engagement between the provider and recipient of services is mutually beneficial, as both benefit through their interactions. The Chicago School seeks to prepare graduates who can apply their discipline to help individual citizens as well as impact larger social systems and policies.</i>
Community	<i>The Chicago School has a “core community” that serves as the base for learning, and the modeling encountered in this learning community becomes reflected in the practice and professional behavior of students and faculty within the greater communities served. The interactions between members of The Chicago School and the extended community are intentional. They actively involve alumni and are critical to the student transformational process. Teaching and learning diversity requires a pluralistic philosophy that advances inclusion, social justice, and self-reflection. Community establishes the relevance of The Chicago School’s education, scholarship, and practice.</i>

Values Underlying the Chicago School's Engaged Practitioner Model:

We Learn, We Innovate, We Serve, We Collaborate



Our students, as a result of participating in this cycle (TCS Learning Goals):

- Are qualified to engage in *professional practice*
- Obtain vital *scholarship* skills that enable them to contribute by *service* and *innovation*
 - Understand, value, and integrate an emphasis on *diversity*
 - Engage in *professional behaviors* that advance the field.

Figure 1. Values underlying The Chicago School's Engaged Practitioner Model.

Table 2

The Chicago School Institutional Learning Outcomes Effective Fall 2017

Learning Outcome	Definitions
Professional Practice:	Graduates will be able to demonstrate attainment in the areas of competency (as reflected in knowledge, skills and attitudes) required by their area of education and training. Examples include evaluation, intervention, consultation, teaching, and supervision.
Diversity:	Graduates will respect the value and dignity of individuals and groups across all cultural contexts, and advocate for inclusion and equity. They will demonstrate intercultural competence in domestic and international contexts with people who have ideas, beliefs, worldviews, experiences, and behaviors that are different from their own.
Professional Behavior:	Graduates will be able to demonstrate by their values, beliefs and behaviors adherence to the highest ethical and professional standards in their personal and professional lives.
Scholarship:	Graduates will be able to integrate scientific research and theory, as broadly defined, to enhance their scholarly and professional endeavors.

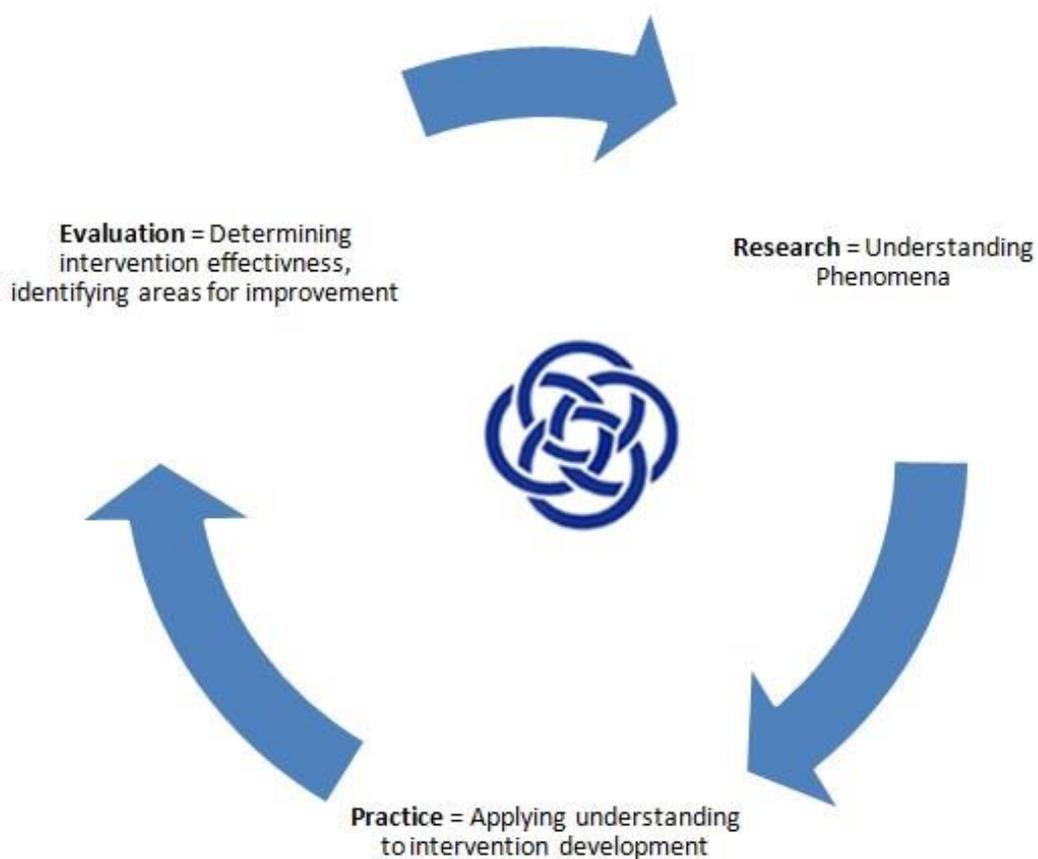
Why Do Students of the Engaged Practitioner Model Complete a Dissertation?

The dissertation began in the days when the PhD was the dominant training model. That model (Boulder Model, 1949) was designed to train a *scientist-practitioner*, and the dissertation was designed to assure that graduates could conduct research and contribute to the field's body of knowledge. In the 1970s, the *practitioner-scholar* model (Vail Model, 1973) was developed and gave birth to the doctor of psychology (PsyD) degree and its emphasis on training clinical practitioners to effectively provide traditional psychological services. While research remained a critical piece of this educational approach, it was differentiated by a broadened range of investigative approaches and potential for application in real-world settings.

In 2009, in response to increasingly diverse and complex societal and international needs, the *engaged-practitioner* model (The Chicago School Model) was unveiled and it sought to reach beyond psychology to other professionals that could play integral roles in transforming lives, organizations, and communities. It combined an emphasis on preparing professionally competent and cross-culturally sensitive practitioners with a responsibility for achieving significant lasting change while adhering to rigorous scholarly methodology.

The Chicago School follows the *engaged-practitioner* model, which extends the borders of the research and scholar-practitioner models and expands the TCSPP values of global education, innovation, community, and service. In summary, research is part of the process of being an Engaged Practitioner, and like the education model, is a cyclical process (see Figure 2).

The Role of Research in Psychology



- The **TCS Graduate**, an Engaged Practitioner, is conversant in all of these domains and capable of expert contributions to at least one.
- The **TCS Dissertation Process** provides an opportunity to complete one full cycle of this process.

Figure 2. The role of research in psychology.

How to Use this Manual

The Dissertation Manual is designed to give the student an overview of the TCSPP commitment to scholarly process as demonstrated by the completion of doctoral dissertations. Students should read this manual so as to:

- Gain a deeper understanding of the institutional history and values that should permeate doctoral work;
- Develop an understanding of TCSPP institutional dissertation requirements;
- Develop an understanding of the TCSPP dissertation institutional process;
- Understand when to depart from this institutional perspective to specific departmental guidelines, and;
- Become aware of the multiple institutional resources at one's disposal that will support engagement and success.

Glossary of Important Terms

Throughout this Dissertation Manual, a number of terms are used. A brief explanation of each is provided below. Individual departments may have slightly different ways of describing the terms but the basic meanings are the same. Students should be familiar with these terms before reading further.

- **Committee.** The dissertation committee collectively refers to the dissertation chair and reader(s).
- **Dissertation.** The dissertation is the complete written product. It includes the chapters of the proposal, modified if necessary, and the results and conclusions from the final research.
- **Dissertation chair.** While the student is the “primary investigator” of the dissertation, the dissertation chair is a program or affiliate faculty member who oversees the research project, guides the student, and ensures the project is conducted in a sound way and meets the department's requirements. The dissertation chair must be a program or affiliate faculty member of the department.
- **Dissertation day.** Some programs establish events at least once a year where students are invited to defend their dissertations. It may be a department-wide or school-wide event.
- **Final defense.** The Final Defense is the final stage of the research project where students defend their findings and conclusions to the dissertation committee and a local community of scholars. Students must also respond to questions and provide a critical examination of their work.
- **Graduate Research Forum.** The Graduate Research Forum is an annual showcase of TCSPP student research in a poster session format, held in collaboration with Career Services, Student Development, and Academic Affairs. Over the past three years, the Graduate Research Forum has featured over 150 poster presentations from Chicago, California, Washington D.C. and Online students, with projects spanning from research questions to completed dissertations.
- **IRB.** The Institutional Review Board reviews the proposed process for all research at the institution to assure the research will be conducted in an ethical manner. Students

must submit an IRB proposal that outlines exactly how the research project will be conducted. A formal letter documenting IRB approval is to be obtained before data collection can begin.

- **IRB central office.** This department handles the administrative components of submitting and getting approval for IRB and for students' proposals.
- **Manuscript Preparation (formerly copyediting).** Manuscript preparation begins the final stage of the dissertation project. Following a successful oral defense, the dissertation is reviewed by a school-appointed dissertation writing expert (DWE) to ensure that it meets printing standards and can then be paper or electronically bound and published. Student-initiated copyediting to prepare the dissertation ready for proposal/dissertation committee review and approval is encouraged. For more information regarding formatting and Manuscript Preparation, please refer to the [TCS Dissertations](#) website.
- **Writing Specialists.** Students may receive one-on-one individualized writing support throughout their studies at TCSPP from staff Writing Specialists. Students may receive individualized support in academic writing through the free E-Tutor service. The E-Tutors are experienced Writing and English Language Specialists, dedicated to supporting students with diverse educational needs and backgrounds.
- **Methodology Specialists.** Methodology consultations are available by appointment through the office of the Institutional Review Board.
- **Project plan.** Students create a project plan, sometimes called a dissertation strategic plan, that outlines their strategy and timeline for completing the dissertation in the years allowed. It is to be updated every semester.
- **Proposal.** The proposal is the "plan" for the final dissertation, and lays out the theory, research question, literature review, rationale, hypotheses (where appropriate), and methodology of the proposed research project. The proposal usually serves as the first three chapters of the dissertation.
- **Proposal defense.** The proposal must be approved by the student's committee before the submission of the IRB application. The proposal defense is conducted in a meeting with the committee and presented orally through discussion.
- **Reader(s).** The reader supports the research with additional expertise, knowledge, and/or resources. Besides the dissertation chair, readers review the proposal and the full dissertation and give approval. Refer to the Department Guidelines on the number and type of readers expected.

Purpose of the Dissertation

Graduates are expected to be able to consume and apply the scholarly literature within this broad definition of professional practice. As a result, TCSPP requires doctoral students to complete a dissertation to assure that they can devise and implement a scholarly study and continue this philosophy as they go into the world of practice. This includes determining competence of the student in developing meaningful research questions, reading the research literature, applying learning in reflective and useful ways, planning and executing a rigorous methodology, and evaluating the effectiveness and limitations of the research.

The dissertation is a large, semi-structured project that requires self-discipline as well as strong time management, communication, and interpersonal skills. It requires students to educate themselves, push the boundaries of cross-cultural competence, engage in critical and reflective thought, and become a new expert in an area of the field. Professional practice requires all these skills, and therefore TCSPP requires students to complete a dissertation to assure that they are ready for independent professional work, and to help them begin to define their own area of expertise and contribution to the field.

The Chicago School doctoral programs maintain a high standard of performance, culminating in a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD), Doctor of Education (EdD), or Doctor of Psychology (PsyD) degree. The major capstone of all three doctorates is the dissertation.

The purpose of the dissertation is three-fold:

- To move the field forward through contribution of original work to the scholarly community;
- To provide evidence of a student's mastery of the program's required research and content competencies;
- To provide the faculty and the institution with a measurement of program effectiveness.

By engaging in clinically relevant research through the dissertation project, students will understand and value the psychological and technical skills that underlie the research process and will be proficient at formally and informally applying those skills effectively in the local and general field of psychology. Thus, regardless of whether a student wants to exclusively engage in clinical practice, program evaluation, clinical research, or a combination, the same set of conceptual and analytic skills are necessary, and will be strengthened through the dissertation process. This concept is at the heart of the Engaged Practitioner Model and must be demonstrated as a prominent and consistent thread throughout the student's dissertation project. Therefore, the mutually reinforcing and clinically relevant purposes of "Engaged Practitioner" dissertation research at TCSPP are to:

- Strengthen a student's ability to independently conceptualize, design, and carry out a significant research project. Even if the student does not plan to pursue formal research following graduation, he or she should be able to design small-scale projects within his or her own practices to help make sense of the data and contribute knowledge to the improvement of practices, agencies, and/or the field in general;
- Increase the student's ability to be a consumer of clinical research relating to the field and to be skilled in navigating and contributing to empirically-based treatment principles that are becoming more common in the field;
- Provide a foundation of skills relevant to an academic or research context for those who wish to pursue careers in such settings.

TCSPP graduates, whether in professional settings or via more broad scholarly dissemination, should be leaders in advancing cross-cultural research and understanding of the best way to approach the problems of modern day. To accomplish this, they must be equipped with the skills to consume and apply formal research, have a basic understanding of how to conduct that research, and engage in the production of new knowledge, across all

settings. In addition to being highly skilled technicians of change, graduates of TCSP should use research methodologies that reflect engaged practice.

Each program determines what research model is appropriate to its discipline and professional field. To review criteria for dissertations, consult departmental dissertation guidelines.

Chapter 1: TCSP Dissertation Requirements

Completing the dissertation is a multistep process. It requires commitment, diligence, and competence. All TCS departments have their own process for educating students about how to complete the dissertation, along with their own coursework. However, there is a core set of requirements that all dissertations must meet, regardless of the department:

Competencies: The institution measures and requires attainment of five critical dissertation research competencies in addition to successful mastery of specific program competencies.

The required institutional competencies are as follows:

- Professionalism
- Conceptual rigor
- Methodological rigor
- Contribution to field knowledge
- Demonstration of cultural awareness in the conduct and interpretation of research

These competencies form a rubric for dissertation evaluation found below and are to be demonstrated in the proposal. The dissertation committee must affirm that appropriate competency rigor has been applied to the proposal via a Proposal Defense meeting.

Required Foci: Every TCS dissertation must address some aspect of the TCS Institutional Values:

- Education
- Innovation
- Service
- Community

Structure: Students generally use the traditional five-chapter elements approach to demonstrate mastery of dissertation competencies, which are as follows:

- Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study (includes articulation of a question(s) of interest);
- Chapter 2: Comprehensive Review of the Literature;
- Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology;
- Chapter 4: Results;
- Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Limitations

These elements, which are essential to a critical and scientific approach to research, traditionally are contained in separate chapters, such as in a five-chapter dissertation.

However, this depends on the research questions and, in select cases, the structure may vary slightly to adequately reflect the project design. The following explanations of the elements are essentially common to all dissertations and departments:

- **Introduction to the study (includes articulation of a question(s) of interest).** A dissertation describes the nature of a problem and a question(s) of interest often called a research question. This question(s) introduces an issue or situation which, when addressed, will provide greater depth or understanding and new knowledge to the field, the discipline, the practice, or the profession. Based on the question(s), a methodology will be selected that will assist in defining expected outcomes or hypotheses that relate to engaged-practice.
- **Comprehensive review of the literature.** The literature review helps inform the question of interest by gathering existing knowledge and providing a critical analysis of the current status of the literature, revealing possible research gaps. It establishes a theoretical framework that the new study will apply to answering the question of interest and the problem and suggests a probable outcome of the product. The literature review also considers how the study relates to the TCSPPE Engaged Practitioner philosophy. This chapter will typically be between 20-50 pages long. This page length should be considered a guideline that needs to be approved by the student's dissertation chair. The review should reach saturation of the literature, providing a full overview of current knowledge and justifying the study. The literature review should be concise, synthesize sufficient literature to demonstrate current and thorough knowledge of the topic, and organized according to some plan. The literature review should lead logically to the rationale for the proposed study which immediately follows the literature review. The rationale is followed by statements of research questions and/or hypotheses. Again, the research questions and/or hypotheses should follow logically from the literature review and rationale.
- **Research design and methodology.** Through a detailed project plan and applying a methodology that aligns with the question of interest, the student describes the research process. As all dissertations require data collection, the student describes thoroughly how the research design will unfold. Thus, the chapter should include the following subsections:
 - **Participants:** The student should identify the population from which the study sample will be selected. Report important characteristics of the population whenever possible. Describe methods of participant recruitment and selection, sample size, and method for group assignments if relevant.
 - **Apparatus, Material, Procedure, and Data Preparation (if applicable):** This subsection is not very common. It describes unusual or unique equipment used in the study in sufficient detail for the study to be replicated by others.
 - **Materials:** This subsection provides descriptions of stimuli, measures, scales, questionnaires, and structured and semi-structured interviews used in the dissertation study. If the measure is published, there is no need to include the entire measure. Just provide a summary of the measure and a few sample items, as well as the method of scoring. Standardization, reliability, and validity data should also be reported whenever available. If the measure is unpublished, obtain permission from the copyright owner to reprint the entire measure as an appendix. If the student is constructing his/her own measure, describe the measure, procedures in the construction of the measure, and the

scoring method, as well as proposed validity and reliability checks. Also discuss what happens if the measure or subsections of the measure do not meet minimum reliability standards.

- Procedure: This subsection provides a detailed description of all the steps involved in conducting the dissertation study from initial contact to debriefing. The reader should have enough details to replicate all of the steps in the study exactly. If lengthy instructions are involved, they should be moved to an appendix in the final dissertation.
- Data Preparation (if applicable): Report proposed manipulation of the data such as transcription of interviews and coding. Also describe proposed reliability checks. All the above should be included in the proposal and the final dissertation. For the final dissertation, the Method section should also include a report of the study sample characteristics (i.e., descriptive statistics on the study sample) in the Participants subsection. Also, report any manipulation of the data and reliability data. If using published measures, compare study reliability data with the published data. Writers should use future tense for the Method section of the proposal but use past tense for the final dissertation.
- **Results.** The results are described without interpretation and the method of reporting the results (e.g., description of statistical analyses and results, graphs, tables, survey response summaries) is dictated by the study design and choice of methods used for data collection. For the dissertation, the student should identify the statistical procedures to be used to answer each research question or to test each hypothesis. The variables involved, the number of levels, and the data source for each variable should be described for each statistical procedure. For the dissertation, report descriptive statistics and the results of each statistical analysis. How the results are reported will depend on the statistical procedure used. However, reporting the result of a statistical hypothesis test follows the same format for all hypothesis tests. For each test, identify the statistical procedure used (e.g., ANCOVA, MANOVA, multiple regression), state whether an effect is significant, the statistic used (e.g., *t*, *F*, Wilks' Lambda), the degree(s) of freedom, the value of the statistic, the significant level, and the effect size if the effect is significant. Present overall tests first. For example, present the results of a MANOVA first, followed by univariate analyses if significant multivariate effect(s) are found. This is followed by post hoc analyses if univariate main effects are found or by simple effects analyses if univariate interaction effects are found. Tables and graphs should be used when appropriate to summarize results and facilitate understanding.
- **Discussion, Conclusions, and Limitations.** In this chapter, the findings of the study are discussed. The student should discuss whether study hypotheses are confirmed, disconfirmed, or partially confirmed; whether research questions are conclusively answered; whether the findings were anticipated or unanticipated; and whether findings are consistent with the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 of the dissertation. The student should also discuss factors that might have contributed to inclusive, unanticipated or inconsistent findings. This discussion of findings is followed by a consideration of the strengths and limitations of the study. Implication of the findings for theories, real life and clinical applications can also be discussed, as well as

direction for future research. The results are analyzed and interpreted, and conclusions are drawn. In addition, the limitations of the study and ecological validity of the results are also examined so as to place the study in full context. The conclusions represent analysis of how the study furthers knowledge about the subject and implications for the engaged-practitioner.

To illustrate mastery of TCSPP research competencies and successfully complete the doctoral program, the basic content elements are to be addressed fully and effectively in every dissertation. The dissertation rubric illustrates what “fully” and “effectively” means and the student should carefully consider the rubric to maximize successful demonstration of the elements.

Content: The TCSPP dissertation is based on standards of rigor of thought and methodological process. Underneath that banner of rigor, there are options for the nature of the product which are as follows:

- Quantitative
- Qualitative and/or
- Mixed Methods

Regardless of the type of study, the core TCS requirement is that all dissertations must utilize a methodological process described in the Structure heading above. Of particular importance is that the student must make some empirically-based assessment of the research question(s), including the collecting and analysis of data. TCS is committed to providing students opportunities to use research methodologies that reflect engaged-practice and which arise out of the unique settings and types of questions faced by the student’s individual field. Each department’s Program dissertation guidelines document provides students examples of acceptable dissertation projects that combine some applied aspect with the traditional data collection methodologies required of all dissertations. Check [Program Dissertation Guidelines](#) for policies applicable to your doctoral program.

Academic Integrity: The originality of work must be substantiated through semi-automated review by a software program and other processes:

Students are to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity throughout the dissertation process. This includes adhering to research procedures approved by IRB, and giving proper credit to others' work. Students are required to adhere to the specific current ethical standards outlined for their profession (e.g., APA, ACA, NCSP *Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct* and will be held accountable to the ethical principles if professional integrity is called in to question. The following are ethical standards that are requirements for each student:

- Plagiarism check requirement- The dissertation chair will submit the proposal and/or dissertation to Turnitin.com, a website which scans the document for exact matches in citing the work of other authors. This practice provides security for the student and the school in ensuring academic integrity. Students may wish to submit their written

work ahead of time and provide the dissertation chair with the report to save time. Details for how to use [Turnitin.com](#) can be found on the [Dissertation Processing site](#).

- Human subject review requirement- All research conducted at The Chicago School must first be reviewed by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) prior to data collection. No data may be collected before IRB has approved the student's application. The mission of IRB is to ensure that ethical guidelines for research are followed in data collection. IRB reviews each dissertation proposal and will either approve the proposal or make a request for changes to meet Federal and APA ethical guidelines for human subjects' research. For more information about the Institutional Review Board policies and procedures, check the [IRB website](#) or contact [IRB](#) publication ethics requirement. Also, for a brief overview, please see section below on the IRB process.
- All TCSPP dissertations must adhere to the APA code of ethics regarding publication credit.
- Basic style requirements- The students must use the most recent edition of *The Publication Manual of APA* as well as TCSPP format requirements listed below:
 - The first pages of a TCSPP dissertation are to be formatted as follows:
 - Title page;
 - Copyright page;
 - Signature page;
 - Acknowledgments (optional);
 - Preface (optional);
 - Abstract (350 words or fewer);
 - Table of Contents; and
 - List of Tables and List of Figures; illustrations and other images should be presented as figures.

Departmental Tracking: *Each department specifies whether/when completion of segments of the dissertation is required and policies for non-compliance.*

Each doctoral program has an individual designated to track the administrative elements of the student's dissertation. In addition, different departments have differing requirements for whether specific sections of the dissertation are due by specific times, or whether all sections are due at the same time. Students should check with their respective dissertation chairs to understand departmental requirements and identify the designated administrative individual. As the student completes certain milestones, the program will require the student to demonstrate progress through timely submission of all required administrative forms to the dissertation tracker. Check individual departmental dissertation guidelines for the specific milestones and forms. There are two major administrative steps that are supported and tracked outside of the department. They are IRB application submission and final Manuscript Preparation as noted below:

- ***IRB (Institutional Review Board) Application Submission:*** Prior to any data collection, the student is required to submit an application to conduct research. Directions and application materials can be found on the [IRB Processing](#) website.

- ***Manuscript Preparation (formerly copyediting).*** Following a successful oral defense, the student is required to submit the completed dissertation to the copyediting process. Directions can be found on the [Manuscript Preparation](#) website.

Chapter 2: TCSPP Dissertation Process Guidelines

Throughout the dissertation process, the student assumes responsibility for writing and preparing the written manuscript. During this process, various parties involved (dissertation chair, reader, IRB) will contribute guidance, ideas, and expertise. The bulk of the work (both in terms of composition and compiling of information) will be carried out by the student and will result in the completion of the dissertation. As the capstone project of their graduate studies, the dissertation is the largest and most comprehensive assignment the student will be required to address. This chapter provides guidelines to assist in understanding the steps involved in this large-scale project.

Overview of Dissertation Process

The following overview of the dissertation process approximates a chronological order. Throughout the process, students may need to revisit specific previous steps. The process includes:

[Gearing up](#): Key principles to keep in mind

[Touch Points](#): Using the doctoral program experience to prepare for the dissertation

[Developing the topic](#): Using coursework and research efforts to find a compelling topic

[Committee selection](#): Determining a mentor and the advisors on the project

[Literature Review for Topic Development](#): Determining what is already known about the student's topic, providing a rationale for the research question [Project Plan](#): Putting a working plan in place to carry out the work

[Developing the Proposal](#): Writing the proposed project

[Preparing the Manuscript](#): Ensuring the written product is ready for defense

[Proposal Defense](#): Defense of the dissertation ideas

[Institutional Review Board \(IRB\)](#): Having the project reviewed for ethical treatment of human subjects

[Publication Options](#): Contributing to the literature with the finished product

[Authorship Guidelines](#): Guidelines for determining authorship and authorship order

Gearing Up

The most common way to tackle big projects is to chunk them down into workable miniprojects called milestones. The dissertation is a collection of chapters put together through finishing small milestones (e.g., taking notes from one key book or putting together one section of the literature review) and large milestones (e.g., finishing the entire literature review). Many people have written about how to complete the dissertation. What follows are ways that faculty and students at TCSPP have found success working through the dissertation process. Students will refer to this chapter often; as they begin and as they

progress through each milestone. Students will gain more advice from their dissertation chairs, department faculty, and from the books read on finishing the dissertation. Since this chapter is full of helpful ideas, it is imperative that students confirm which are expected from each department and which are good ideas, but may be optional. See departmental dissertation guidelines. The following are some practical considerations that may help the dissertation process:

- **Address issues of time management.** Dissertations do not write themselves. Students will have to expect to commit a certain number of hours each day, or each week, to the dissertation. Students are busy with work, internships, family, and other obligations. Yet at dissertation time with an eye toward graduation, students will need to devote a considerable amount of time to reading, formulating ideas, and writing for this project. The dissertation process can be thought of as a half-time position requiring at least 30 hours per week.
- **Break the process down into manageable units.** Viewing the dissertation as a single, lengthy entity may result in feeling overwhelmed and inadequate. Structuring the dissertation as a series of small, specific pieces will give a sense of direction. Doing this will also facilitate issues of time management.
- **Create an environment conducive to the work.** It will be more difficult for the student to work effectively if the workspace is cluttered with bills to be paid or lists of household chores to be done. During this process, students will be collecting numerous books and journal publications, and will need some strategy and space in which to organize them. Make certain to have adequate light and no interruptions while working.
- **Seek sources of support.** Many students are under the (incorrect) impression that they must go it alone during the dissertation process. The dissertation chair and committee members have agreed to help. Students should not hesitate to contact them if stuck and in need of assistance (be sure to check with the dissertation chair about protocol as to who to contact first). It is also important that students have supportive members in their social networks that will give them the space they need to complete their work, as well as a shoulder to lean on when necessary.
- **Don't expect the entire process to go smoothly.** Expect to rewrite drafts of the doctoral proposal and final document several times. Even a well-designed study might need rethinking once data collection has begun. Events in life have a tendency to interfere with the dissertation process, so be prepared for some bumps in the road. The key is to keep the focus and maintain the motivation.
- **To quote a member of the faculty, "the creative process is not linear."** This means that, on any given day, the task list may mandate completion of the chapter on research design and method, but your brain may not be cooperative. When these days occur, avoid the urge to (a) sit blankly at the computer screen for hours, or (b) give up on making any progress at all. Be flexible and realize that there is always something that can be done, whether it involves working on formatting or doing more reading.
- **Back up all documents on an external data storage device.** This may sound trivial, but far too many students have lost valuable data due to computer malfunctions. With USB Flash Drives, CDs, and extensive memory in modern computers, there is no valid reason as to why a student should not have multiple back-ups of their documents.

- **Label all versions.** It is easy to get confused and send wrong versions. Make sure that each version is labeled with specific dates, in order to recognize the most recent edition.

Touch Points

To get the most out of the dissertation, and to ensure timely completion of the degree, it is important to be thinking about the dissertation process and where possible, using required assignments in coursework to complete or at least initiate ideas that will later become sections of the dissertation Proposal.

To assist students in moving through this process in a timely manner, there are certain informal things that can be done to progress. In general, students are encouraged to follow these standard practices as they engage in doctoral coursework:

- Maintain a constant and relentless focus on one or more topic areas of interest throughout the program. This will allow for in depth expertise in those areas as well as a move toward timely completion of the dissertation.
- Utilize early coursework to explore topics, select a topic and a broad method choice as early as feasible.
- Utilize any required written papers in coursework as an opportunity to explore potential topics in more detail.
- Many students find that the literature review section of the dissertation is especially difficult. If a student selects a broad topic area, writes several papers about it, and seeks connections in class, they are informally building that literature review. An early focus on writing an outline of the literature review and more directly utilizing class experiences to flesh that out will help the assembly of a portfolio of pieces that can be brought together later to build the literature review.
- For content specific classes (e.g., Advanced Family Systems Theories, Psychopharmacology, etc.), always be looking to delve into that aspect of the topic area.
- Semester breaks: Many students find it difficult to get “over the hump” on certain dissertation tasks while in school. Yet one or two solid days (or even weeks) where focus is solely on the dissertation can move a student forward in substantial ways. Vacations, down time, and family time are critical for good health and wellness; balance these needs with the need to progress on the dissertation and plan in advance so as to maximally use the school breaks for all of these activities.

In addition to this general counsel, students should identify important intersections with curriculum and the dissertation process. Check the specific curriculum for coursework in research design and methods, literature review classes, and writing classes (i.e., classes that are used to directly prepare for the dissertation). If possible, utilize these classes to actually complete early drafts of sections of the manuscript (e.g., method section could grow out of the research methods/statistics courses).

Developing the Topic

Prior to engaging a committee or conducting the first formal step of the dissertation process, the proposal, students will want to have determined their topic. This step takes much thought and conscientious review of the literature. *Nothing prepares an individual more for the decision on his or her topic than reading what research others have done.* Students will get helpful ideas in their dissertation development classes. However, what follows are some hints as to how to develop the topic and how to use the literature to be informed:

- Finding a research topic can be perceived as overly challenging, or it can be as easy as letting curiosity roam among unexplained phenomena in a field of clinical interest, asking such questions as “why?” and “how?” and “what if?” Such speculations provide the beginnings of the problem to be researched as well as the hypotheses or objectives that guide every doctoral study. Many students come to the doctoral process with a very general idea of the topic they would like to explore. Consult the departmental guidelines for more detailed assistance in this area.

These are a few of the useful sources or activities that can inspire a dissertation topic:

- Ask for suggestions from instructors, practica/internship supervisors and research professionals.
- Study the recommendations for further research found at the end of dissertations and journal articles. Dissertations can be found in the library and through [ProQuest](#). Database searches are a good place to begin. Consider the books that one purchases or journals one looks through: What are the topics of the chapters or articles that hold the most interest? Which might be read with enthusiasm?
- Read professional literature critically, looking for serious flaws in logic or theory or design and procedures. One research study's errors easily become another investigator's point of creative departure.
- Participate in professional seminars, workshops, and conventions, and list the topics of sessions attended. What interest pattern shows up?
- Increase the time spent in reading professional literature. During this early phase of topic selection, increase the quantity of professional literature that is read each week. Reading depth should vary, from casual perusal of titles and abstracts of online publications in PsycINFO, ABI/INFORM, and other relevant research databases, to skimming for topic-related terms and concepts in books and articles already in possession.
- Students should extend the range of professional literature read to include the practical and theoretical aspects of their discipline and related subjects.
- Conduct systematic, computer searches of bibliographic databases and critically study the results of that search. Delay extensive computer searches until one or more topics of high interest have been chosen (by evaluative, extensive, personal review of the literature) and only the research focus remains in question. Learn which “key words” show up in the searches that have been conducted in order to reframe or refine a search. Look for the names of specific, psychological tests used in prior research on a

given topic, not just conceptual terms related to the topic itself. Helpful tutorials for how to search can be found at: <https://chi.librarypass.org/online-tutorials/>

The goal of the above activities is to select a general topic, and to sharpen it into a workable plan. The following resources are valuable to help narrow the focus (Reed & Baxter, 1983, pp. 22-26):

- Review recent textbooks on the topic and examine the major sources that they reference;
- Review the contemporary handbooks related to the topic. They offer summaries by experts, are more comprehensive than textbooks and articles, and contain extensive bibliographies;
- Read annual reviews that relate to the topic, such as recent editions of the *Annual Review of Psychology*. Annual reviews present evaluative summaries of the progress and status of selected major fields of psychology;
- Consult the cumulative indexes to comprehensive collections such as *Psychological Abstracts*, *Index Medicus*, and *Dissertation Abstracts International*. Actively and frequently utilize online databases, such as PsycINFO and ABI/INFORM;
- To further refine the focus of the topic, develop a list of topical terms that will aid the choice of new, potential, literature sources. This list of subject terms will improve the specificity of searches in bibliographic indexes or databases.
- Not all interesting topics are suitable for a dissertation. Students must be cautioned that, even with the best intentions, certain topics might be better addressed by others. Limited resources with respect to time and finances provide challenges to the student researcher.
- As discussed in Cone and Foster (2006), issues of personal relevance can provide a good source for research questions. However, students must use caution when considering a topic that might stir up personal, unpleasant emotions, which could ultimately hinder completion of the project. Dissertation research requires objectivity and a lack of personal bias. If there is any doubt as to the appropriateness of a topic, discuss it with members of the faculty.
- The student can lose a great deal of time, money and effort by producing a doctoral proposal only to find that participants cannot be located, or are unwilling to serve. Sad to say, a number of students have had to go back to the beginning of their research investigation because participants were not available, and several have had to redesign their studies because willing participants could not be found.

With topic and focus settled, begin shaping the research problem and research questions into unambiguous statements. The answer to the problem statement is the study itself. It is expected to make a scholarly, creative and practical contribution to the knowledge of a student's discipline.

Committee Selection

Refer to [Program Dissertation Guidelines](#) to determine the process for selecting and/or being matched with a dissertation chair. Students will select readers, as part of their dissertation

committee. This is an important milestone in a student's academic career. It is the point at which a student moves from the master's level in their graduate training to a more advanced stage of professional development. Students are no longer "writing papers"; they are conducting original research and, under the guidance of the dissertation chair, they begin defining and developing their own area of expertise and unique contribution to the field.

The following outlines the role of the dissertation chair:

- **The dissertation chair is a sounding board.** While the student is responsible for the dissertation project, the dissertation chair helps students identify their passions and refine their ideas into focused questions worthy of scholarly inquiry. This means the dissertation chair often answers questions with more questions and holds as suspect what seems clear and obvious to a student.
- **The dissertation chair is a senior colleague.** While students must become an expert in their field of study, some things can only be learned through integration of divergent perspectives, and periodic review of what was previously understood. This means the dissertation chair may expect students to offer conclusive interpretations of their important findings, and then to expand upon their weaknesses and limitations.
- **The dissertation chair is a coach.** While the student is ultimately responsible for seeing the project through to completion, the dissertation chair helps the student set and reach goals, and plan wisely for the unexpected. This means the dissertation chair may be a source of encouragement and great optimism at times, and then persistently engage in challenging the student at other times.
- **The dissertation chair is a professional mentor.** While the student may have no difficulty developing and implementing a focused project they care about, the dissertation chair considers the value of the dissertation to the student. Thus, the dissertation chair may question students as to why they care about their areas of study, what they intend to personally do with the knowledge and insight they gain, and how their dissertation projects enhance their viability in the professional marketplace.
- **The dissertation chair is a quality control agent.** While students often describe the dissertation as their original contribution to the field, the dissertation chair understands it as a ticket that demonstrates the student's right to be admitted to the ranks of the profession. The student, as noted above, views the dissertation as a representation of the student's qualifications to practice in the field and be worthy of the title *Doctor*. The dissertation chair determines course grades and deems the dissertation itself to be successfully defended based on the student's demonstrated ability to:
 - Write and think as a professional;
 - Conduct the project in an ethical and professional way;
 - Complete the planned stages of the project; and
 - Present a final work that reflects well on the student and the profession.

The following outlines the role of the reader(s):

- **The reader is a unique lens.** Generally, the reader's role is to contribute a new lens to the dissertation process. This lens is hopefully used from the initial sketch of the proposal through the final drafts of the dissertation. Readers often act as "polishers"; they may, for instance, help to refine the scope of the literature review or redesign the methodology. The dissertation chair is the main co-creator of the project, but readers

have “veto power,” in that they are able to stop the project at any stage or may stop the project to help a student make significant revisions.

- **The reader is an active reviewer.** The reader puts his or her “stamp of approval” on both the dissertation proposal and final draft. As such, any major changes a student makes to the proposal or final product (e.g., number of subjects, design, or scope of study is changed) will need to be approved by the reader. In addition, the best way for a student to work with a reader throughout the dissertation process is to quickly honor any requested changes and to clarify with the reader(s) how involved they would like to be in the process beyond the above description. For example, students will want to clarify whether a reader would like to see edits incorporated before they move on in the process, or whether the reader trusts the dissertation chair and student to honor the requests. Students should refer to departmental dissertation guidelines on the process and timelines of when they will be allowed to submit materials to their reader(s). In general, the student and a potential reader will want to talk explicitly about expectations before agreeing to work together. Students are expected to maintain a good working relationship with the reader(s). This requires appreciating several things related to the function and commitment of the reader(s). The reader(s) typically leaves/leave most of the formative work on the dissertation to the student and dissertation chair and, after this is done, offers a “polishing touch” as an experienced professional.

Based on these factors, there are several behaviors that would be considered unprofessional and discourteous:

- The reader(s) is/are listed as one of the advisors of the dissertation, and as such must give approval to the nature of the study as well as the method. Students do not omit the reader(s)'s approval before applying for IRB permission to begin the project, or make substantial changes to the project without consulting the reader(s);
- Students do not send the reader(s) a draft that has not been approved by the dissertation chair (and thus is not ready for polishing), or expect the reader(s) to “drop everything” to review a draft sent without warning and return comments in a short time frame;
- Most readers enjoy offering a “polishing touch” to the dissertation and working with a student who appreciates that respect. Students do not treat the reader(s) as someone who “rubber stamps” the dissertation without edits or additions, or as someone who “holds things up” by requesting significant additions or refinements.

There are several things students will want to make a point to do:

- Most readers become involved at the proposal stage and again at the dissertation stage. Students will want to provide readers with progress reports at least once a semester/term during that intervening time to keep them up to date on the dissertation project;
- Because most readers have other responsibilities, students will want to provide at least 2 weeks advanced notice of a coming draft so readers can clear time to review the draft. Students will not want to assume that readers are available over semester breaks to review drafts. For courtesy, students are encouraged to email a possible reader immediately after a meeting with him or her that sums up what was discussed, closing

with a clear indication that the student want him or her to be a reader, or that the student is still meeting with possible readers;

- After reviewing a proposal or dissertation, readers may decide the final draft is “approved,” “not approved,” or “approved with edits.” Students will want to be very clear about edits made and keep their dissertation chair informed of their progress. A matrix spreadsheet that lists the requested changes, and by whom, followed by the exact change made with a page reference is often an efficient way of managing and demonstrating changes.

Refer to departmental dissertation guidelines to determine the number and department expectations of a reader(s). Before completion of the proposal, and as designated by the department, students choose one or more readers. PsyD students choose minimally a second committee member who serves as reader for their dissertation. PhD and EdD students choose two committee members who serve as readers.

Students will want to make sure the potential reader is aware of the time commitment when serving as a reader(s), especially if he or she has not been on a dissertation committee before. Students will want to choose someone who brings something they need to the study (methodology skill, special knowledge of the topic, cognitive and insightful support, etc.).

If the student’s program requires a second reader, students are encouraged to select from outside TCSPP faculty. This committee member should demonstrate expertise in the dissertation interest and field of study. Before the final selection of the reader(s), students will want to consult with their dissertation chair to receive guidance. They will want a reader(s) who can work well with the dissertation chair and agree on expectations for the dissertation.

When meeting with a potential reader(s), here are some candid points to discuss:

- The expectations of the reader(s) of a dissertation in general and the student in particular;
- How involved the reader(s) wishes to be and when;
- How often the reader(s) desires updates on the student’s progress;
- How long it takes on average for the reader(s) to return drafts and feedback to the student;
- What the reader(s) finds most helpful in working with students, and most important in a successful dissertation.

Once a reader is selected and confirmed with the dissertation chair, students will want to email the reader and follow up with getting his/her signature on the Reader Selection Form. As in every step of the dissertation process, students are responsible to see that this form is submitted correctly to the department. Refer to departmental dissertation guidelines for specific procedures on completion and submission of the Reader Selection Form. The same procedure takes place for each reader.

Literature Review for Topic Development

The purpose of beginning a review of the literature at this early stage of topic development is to give idea(s) depth and breath. The literature will excite and encourage ideas. The literature will help refine the topic and help form a meaningful research question. There is no step in the start of the dissertation process more important than delving into the literature.

According to Pan (2004), “A literature review is a synthesis of the literature on a topic. To create the synthesis, one must first interpret and evaluate pieces of literature. Then, the ideas and information they contain must be integrated and restated in order to create a new, original written work” (p. 1). In other words, a review of the literature provides the student (and committee members) with an overall portrait of the research to date on a given topic. Through the use of books and current scholarly journal articles, the body of work done by researchers and practitioners is summarized and evaluated (Fink, 2005). Gaps or inconsistencies found through the review process provide excellent opportunities for students to find the focus for their own work.

So, where does one begin? Take, for example, a proposal for a psychosocial study of attention-deficit-hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Rather than succumbing to the attempt to review every work known in the study of ADHD (a daunting task that typically results in little progress), focus should be made toward an initial search to explore current treatment models, training programs, change initiatives, or behavioral strategies. Through the use of databases such as PsycINFO and PubMed, identify key scholars in that area (See Appendix A for additional library resources). Once the key players are known, it is easier to find books or book chapters that they have written, and journals that publish their work (Cone & Foster, 2006).

Although it may seem counterintuitive, taking it slow at the beginning will assist in creating a sound, rather than haphazard, review. The use of the bibliographies and reference pages of a few works will increase resources exponentially. Through reading and taking notes, students will begin to absorb the methodologies, theoretical approaches, and implications of research conducted on their topics. It is at that point that the relevance and feasibility of a topic will begin to emerge and the writing process begins. Once a topic is defined and a research question formed, the next step is to develop a project plan and develop the dissertation committee.

The Project Plan

This document outlines how a student plans to complete the dissertation. It will serve as the benchmark against which the dissertation chair will determine whether a student has made sufficient enough progress to earn a grade of credit during each required semester. Thus, students will want to carefully craft the project plan being conscious of setting realistic, manageable goals for each semester. Students will want to review the requirements of their programs. It is helpful to start with the last goal and work backwards, organizing goals by semester. Refer to departmental dissertation guidelines for a timetable. The following are a few ideas of what should be thought about and incorporated into a project plan; however, please refer to departmental dissertation guidelines for a timetable.

- **Realistic timeline.** Students will want to include a detailed timeline for completing each section of the proposal. The more detailed and organized the timeline, the more efficient their work will be. Students will want to include action items or specific steps to reach goals and deadlines, and be feasible. It is helpful to set aside blocks of time to work on the dissertation every day. These may be small blocks of 15 to 30 minutes on some days, and longer blocks of several hours on other days. Students will want to include action items that can be completed in these blocks of time in their project plan (for example, updating the bibliography, reviewing a journal article or chapter, or expanding a chapter).
- **Draft reviewed.** While planning, students will want to include submitting multiple drafts of the dissertation before it is approved by the dissertation chair and the reader(s). Work with the dissertation chair to identify how he or she will review work drafts, usually in sections. The dissertation chair will give feedback to guide writing, and conceptualization of the dissertation. One can expect multiple drafts again before the committee approves the proposal. The dissertation chair and reader(s) will likely need several weeks to review and return each draft, and students will want to plan time for review as well as time for themselves to make the edits and revisions required by the committee.
- **Resources gathered.** Plan how resources necessary for the dissertation will be gathered: resources that take time include journal articles and books that may come from interlibrary loan; specific software for analyzing data; acquisition of a needed survey; interview (one two-hour interview can take 8-12 hours, if transcribed); permission to use copyrighted information, which may take several months. If students keep an updated references page throughout the writing process, they will find it far easier to remove a citation for a source that was not needed than it is to search for a lost source.
- **Archival studies** (if relevant). Students conducting archival studies will want to include time to manually search through archived data, which may include searching through boxes or file drawers, copying forms and data, and re-filing items.
- **Costs.** Students will want to include the costs for copying and test supplies, mailing surveys, or purchasing special books or tests for the dissertation project. They will want to include costs of gift certificates, donations, or other incentives for participants.
- **Service learning.** Although this may be post-graduation, students will want to think about and perhaps include in their plan the time and effort to “give back” to the community they have studied. This might mean, for example, in-service trainings or a presentation of the dissertation results to the agency where the student collected their data.
- **Back up plans.** As students are the managers of their project and its success depends on their ability to manage through the rough times, they will want to be proactive and create back up plans, such as in cases where they may face delays in obtaining approval from an external IRB, lose a source to recruit participants, and/or obtain insufficient data for higher-level statistical analysis. In other words, students will want to be active with some part of their dissertation project while they wait for others to complete a task.

Dissertation Proposal Development

A dissertation Proposal is the beginning sections or chapters (Chapters 1- 3) of a dissertation that outline the anticipated scope and method of the dissertation. It is in many ways a contract between the student on one hand and the dissertation chair, reader(s), and department on the other.

A dissertation Proposal generally includes the following areas, although this outline may be modified for different types of dissertations:

- **Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study (includes articulation of a question(s) of interest).** This chapter describes question(s) of interest often called a research question. It describes the nature of a problem. This question(s) introduces an issue or situation that, when addressed, will provide greater depth or understanding and new knowledge to the field, the discipline, the practice, or the profession. It is an introduction of the topic that includes statement of the research question and hypotheses, and rationale for how the project will contribute to the practice of the discipline (psychology, leadership, international, etc.)
- **Chapter 2: Comprehensive Review of the Literature.** This chapter provides a comprehensive study of the literature pertaining to the topic and specifically the research question. Students are encouraged to have use articles that have been published in the last 5 years (85% is a good rule of thumb).
- **Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology.** This chapter contains a detailing of procedures that will be used to carry out the proposed study with a plan for how the results will be analyzed and how particular findings might require additional analysis.
- **References.** This includes all references used for the literature review. The list is to be APA formatted.
- **Appendix of Measures and Forms.** Information/measures that will be used in data collection (all but previously validated, well-established measures are required for the IRB proposal).

[IRB:](#) In keeping with the principles of beneficence and non-maleficence that underlie the profession of psychology, research conducted by psychologists should be conducted in a way that minimizes the risk to human subjects participating in that research. Students may contact [IRB for](#) methodological assistance while composing the IRB application. An external consultant engaged by the student (at the student's expense) will only have limited contribution to the writing of the dissertation as approved by the department chair if deemed appropriate by the dissertation chair.

TCS maintains a committee of faculty and staff called the Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB reviews all research involving human subjects to ensure compliance with basic ethical practices for protecting subjects. The IRB application has three parts, which are as follows:

- [Cover sheet](#)
- [Questions and Answers](#), including:

- Study purpose and procedures ○
- Subject Recruitment
- Description of risks to participants
- Measures to minimize risks ○
- Method of obtaining informed consent
- [Supplemental Materials](#), for studies involving children

Following the proposal defense yet before enrollment of participants or data collection, the student must apply to have the study approved by the IRB. There are numerous things that the committee reviews, and an exhaustive list is beyond the scope of this manual. However, the following list provides an idea of the most central issues the IRB review will assure:

- Participation in research is clearly voluntary and contains no element of coercion, fear of negative consequences, or excessive rewards that would influence participation in subjective ways.
- Participants are clearly informed of information relevant to their decision to participate.
- Data from subjects are kept confidential and adequate protections for privacy are in place.
- Special protections are in place for populations vulnerable to risk such as children, institutionalized people, or mentally disabled individuals.
- Experimental procedures or contrived situations to which participants are exposed do not present unacceptable risks to the safety or health of participants and that adequate measures to minimize risks that do exist are identified.
- The student and dissertation chair have recently completed the [CITI online training module](#).

The review process is completely electronic. Applications for review of research can be submitted at any time, and are often returned within 4 weeks if minimal risk to participants can be verified. Still, applicants will want to plan ahead, as IRB reviewer schedules and the volume and complexity of proposals extend return time. If the study involves more than minimal risk to participants, the student should expect significantly longer to get the study approved. The student needs to be aware that revisions are typically required and these take additional time to review and process.

All parts are to be submitted at the same time. Incomplete applications and/or failure to follow directions will result in a returned application and significant delay in the approval process. Full directions can be found on Institutional Review Board site, which has the most current forms, instructions, and information related to submitting an application to TCS IRB committee.

An IRB application will not be accepted unless the student's dissertation chair is able to verify the following:

- Student is in good standing at TCS.
- The dissertation committee has approved the student's dissertation proposal.
- Office of Institutional Research has pre-approved a campus-based survey (if applicable).

- IRB application is complete.

For more information about the Institutional Review Board process, visit the [IRB Processing](#) website or e-mail: IRB@thechicagoschool.edu

Proposal Defense

After completing the final draft of the dissertation proposal, the student meets with at least two members of the dissertation committee as a group to discuss the acceptance of the proposal. The student should prepare to give a comprehensive description of the proposal and to defend the design and elements of the proposal. Committee members will ask questions and discuss essential requirements of the project to insure that an appropriate plan goes forward. This is also an opportunity for the student to make sure that they feel comfortable with the final proposal and are confident of being able to carry out the project.

Preparing the Manuscript

The Chicago School makes a variety of resources available to students working on their dissertations, and students are encouraged to access these resources if they need assistance, which are as follows:

- **Courses.** Each department may offer classes such as Statistics I and II, Research Methods, Qualitative Methods, Professional Development Group;
- **Colloquia.** Faculty may offer colloquia to orient all students to the scholarly process;
- **Manuscript preparation services (formerly copyediting).** Preparing for publication after the dissertation and oral defense have been approved is provided by The Chicago School through The National Center for Teaching and Learning (NCTL). This service will be used when the student submits a final draft dissertation that has been placed in publication style format.
- **Methodology Consultation** is available by appointment through the IRB.
- **Consultation with the Dissertation Designee (DD).** Some departments have a dissertation designee who can clarify any questions regarding procedure and paperwork requirements. The DD can clarify procedural issues regarding timelines, processes, accessing resources, and grading criteria. For those departments that do not have DD, consult with the program manager or Resource Café in Canvas for clarification as to where to clarify procedures and paperwork.
- **Library Resources.** The Library offers a number of free online classes to assist students with conducting and writing scholarly work, as well as utilizing Library electronic resources (see Appendix A). Students can contact their local library for specific on-ground resources.

Given the above guidelines, once the dissertation process is complete (i.e., the dissertation has been approved by the committee and defended) and the student has met criteria for having passed this step in the process, publication of the dissertation is an option. Dissertations are electronically submitted through [The Chicago School ProQuest website](#).

Following a successful oral defense, the departmental dissertation designee should inform the manuscript preparation administrator by e-mailing dissertationprocessing@thechicagoschool.edu no more than 10 days after the committee has approved the final dissertation. Students will then be assigned a dissertation writing expert to guide them through the manuscript preparation process.

At the manuscript preparation stage, the TCS team of dissertation writing experts only review the document for APA style, grammar, and formatting issues. A student's dissertation will be officially submitted to ProQuest after the dissertation writing expert deems their work complete and ready for submission. Table 3 shows the step by step process for the dissertation manuscript preparation requirements.

Table 3

Manuscript Preparation & Publishing

The Department Dissertation Designee confirms the successful oral defense by signing tracking form to the dissertation processing department.

The student is assigned a dissertation writing expert (DWE), who enrolls the student in the Canvas classroom "Manuscript Preparation."

The student reviews the Student Checklist provided in Canvas. The student then uploads the document to Canvas under "Initial Review."

The DWE and student work on the dissertation until the DWE deems the work to be complete.

At the DWE's request, the student uploads the final pdf version of the dissertation to their ProQuest submission profile. The DWE checks and approves the final version and confirms its readiness for submission with the dissertation processing department. Student gathers signatures for signature page and uploads it to Canvas.

The copy editor sends completed dissertation tracking form to student, departmental dissertation designee, registrar, and chair, signaling student's completion of dissertation processing. The copy editor submits dissertation to ProQuest for binding and publishing.

Publication Options

Discussion pertaining to the possibility of publication will want to be initiated as soon as possible — ideally from the time of commitment between student, dissertation chair and reader(s). This discussion will want to touch on the various variables that may come into play, including but not limited to:

- The originator of the idea;
- Proprietorship of the data;
- Consents for the utilization of personal material for publication purposes (in cases where client narrative data is utilized);
- The amount of work involved;

- Costs associated with obtaining and securing psychological instruments/tools (tests, questionnaires, permissions, etc.) and;
- Responsibility for managing the data and its outcomes.

The issue surrounding authorship usually refers to written work that is organized and submitted to a peer-reviewed journal post-defense of the dissertation. In terms of publication, a number of options exist.

Customarily, the student who did the most amount of work and whose dissertation makes up the bulk of the material in the article is first author followed by other individuals who helped in this process in order of relative contribution and terminating with the dissertation chair or reader's name. It is customary that the dissertation chair or reader appears last on published materials while managing all responsibility related to the published work. The last author on the published work is usually recognized by the community as having been the senior researcher who directed the work, mentored the individuals involved, and facilitated the young professional's scholarly development. Most correspondence and inquiry about the publication is addressed to this senior member. Most researchers adhere to this process at time of publication and support the idea that this is a scholarly launching of sorts.

Throughout the dissertation process, the student will assume main responsibility for writing and preparing the written manuscript; this is necessary for the student to qualify for graduation. During this process, various parties involved (dissertation chair, reader[s]) will contribute guidance, ideas and expertise, involving potential access to data, while the bulk of the work (both in terms of composition and compiling of information) will be carried out by the student and result in the completion of the dissertation.

In research based or laboratory situations, where the dissertation chair or a reader is the Principal Investigator, the laboratory/agency typically assumes responsibility for the data, costs associated with running the study, and the benefits associated with its publication—this is typically indicated via the position of the authors on the published work. Customarily, the student who did the most amount of work and whose dissertation makes up the bulk of the material in the article is first author, followed by other individuals who helped in this process in order of relative contribution and terminating with the Principal Investigator's name. It is customary that Principal Investigators (whether dissertation chair or reader[s]) appear last on published materials while managing all related responsibility related to the published work. The last author on the published work is usually recognized by the community as having been the senior researcher who directed the work, mentored the individuals involved, and facilitated the young professional's scholarly development. Most correspondence and inquiry about the publication is addressed to this senior member. Most researchers adhere to this process at time of publication and support the idea that this is a scholarly launching of sorts.

Many dissertations-turned-publications come out of nontraditional research environments. In such circumstances it is recommended that the student discuss the authorship arrangement with the contributing parties as early as possible. Generally, TCSPP supports that all parties involved respect the APA ethical guidelines and recognize that many supervisors, dissertation

chairs and reader(s) will want first authorship on any published work. In such cases TCSPSPP advises that students:

- Familiarize themselves with the ethical guidelines;
- Conduct a pro/con analysis of publishing the work;
- Negotiate with the person asking for primary authorship;
- Choose whether to go ahead or not before entering into this arrangement;
- Write language to support and affirm APA language that published work from the dissertation is authored by the student, dissertation chair, reader(s), etc.

Authorship Guidelines

The APA code of ethics indicates the following regarding publication credit:

- A. Psychologists take responsibility and credit, including authorship credit, only for work they have actually performed or to which they have substantially contributed. (See Standard [8.12b, Publication Credit](#).)
- B. Principal authorship and other publication credits accurately reflect the relative scientific or professional contributions of the individuals involved, regardless of their relative status. Mere possession of an institutional position, such as department dissertation chair, does not justify authorship credit. Minor contributions to the research or to the writing for publications are acknowledged appropriately, such as in footnotes or in an introductory statement.
- C. Except under exceptional circumstances, a student is listed as principal author on any multiple-authored article that is substantially based on the student's doctoral dissertation. Faculty advisors discuss publication credit with students as early as feasible and throughout the research and publication process, as appropriate. (See Standard [8.12b, Publication Credit](#); APA, 2003)

Given the above guidelines, once the dissertation process is complete (e.g., the dissertation has been approved by the committee and defended) and the student has met criteria for having passed this step in the matriculation process, publication of the dissertation is an option.

Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodologies

The Chicago School requires PhD, EdD, PsyD, and master's applied projects students to conduct their research in the manner of an . The choice of research methodology should be guided by the underlying TCSPP philosophy of engaged practice. This chapter addresses different kinds of research methodologies and resources for further reading.

After finalizing the dissertation question, the student should select a methodology to explore the question. This is done in consultation with the committee, based on the skill of all involved in using the methodology, and the ability of the student to use the methodology to explore the specific research question. Most topics can be explored with many methodologies. Listed below are several types of dissertation methodologies:

Quantitative Study

Quantitative studies require the collection, analysis, and interpretation of data using quantitative analysis (broadly defined to include original data collected by the student, secondary analysis of preexisting data or archival data, replications, and meta-analysis). The interpretation of results must remain within the boundaries permitted by the research model used. A critical component of this type of dissertation will be the availability of participants and the potential to locate the number of participants needed in a reasonable period of time. Quantitative investigations can be in the form of a single case time series, or a group design with the appropriate statistical analysis. Before data collection, the issue of statistical power should be considered (either via formal power analysis or information consideration based on recommended guidelines and rule of thumb for the specific statistical analyses) when finalizing methodology and participant choice.

Some strengths of this method include the ability to generalize findings to appropriate populations, replication of other studies of note, refinement of previous findings and clinical applications, and other scholarly benefits. Some weaknesses of this method include difficulty capturing qualitative richness of clinical material, difficulty recruiting sufficient sample size in timely fashion, and other types of weaknesses related to the specific study design. These limitations are often identified and addressed at some point in the dissertation draft (e.g., a specific section on limitations, qualifying statements for conclusions, etc.).

The methods for a quantitative analysis are varied and determined by the nature of the research question (Gelso, 1979; Kazdin, 2003). Under the supervision of the dissertation chair, the student can select from a range of quantitative research methods that enable rigorous scholarly pursuit of the dissertation research question.

Students may also draw from one of several alternative classifications of quantitative methods to conceptualize their project, such as Gelso's (1979) typology of "experimental analogue," "experimental field," "correlational analogue," and "correlational field" designs (cf., Ponterotto, 1988). In addition, students should note that quantitative designs can be expanded to include

qualitative components that enhance the overall dissertation research (e.g., mixed methods approaches that provide structured focus groups, structured interviews, consensual qualitative research (CQR), or other qualitative methods to elaborate on an outcome or process variable).

This type of dissertation involves the following steps:

- Conceptualization of problem;
- Development of hypotheses;
- Placement of topic in the relevant literature;
- Design of the methodology;
- Select measurements;
- Recruit participants/obtain dataset;
- Selection and execution of statistical procedures; and □ Data analysis and interpretation.

Resources Quantitative

- Brace, N., Kempe, R., & Snelgar, R. (2013). *SPSS for Psychologists* (5th edition). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Clark-Carter, D. (1997). *Doing quantitative psychology research: From design to report*. Hove, England: Taylor & Francis (Psychology Press).
- Gelso, C. J. (1979a). Research in counseling: Methodological and professional issues. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 8(3), 7-35.
- Gravetter, F. J. & Wallnau, L. B. (2012). *Statistics for the behavioral sciences* (9th edition). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning.
- Kazdin, A. E. (2002). *Methodological issues and strategies in clinical research* (3rd edition). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Kazdin, A. (2003). *Research design in clinical psychology* (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Meyers, L. S., Gamst, G., & Guarino, A. J. (2012). *Applied multivariate research: Design and interpretation* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Miller, A. B. (2008). *Finish your dissertation once and for all! How to overcome psychological barriers, get results, and move on with your life*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Ponterotto, J. G. (1988). Racial/ethnic minority research in the Journal of Counseling Psychology: A content analysis and methodological critique. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 35, 410-418.
- Tabachnick, B. G. & Fidell, L. S. (2007). *Using multivariate statistics* (5th ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Wolf, F. M. (1986). *Meta-analysis: Quantitative methods for research synthesis*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Qualitative Study

Qualitative psychological research investigates the distinctive, essential characteristics of experience and action as lived by persons. It describes and attempts to understand “actual instances of human action and experience from the perspective of participants who are living through a particular situation” (Fischer, 2006, p. xvi). Qualitative study uses descriptive language and the meanings associated with such language as the base unit for analysis. “The use of evocative language is a means through which the describer attempts to help a reader or listener secure an image of and feel for the situation or qualities being described” (Camic, Rhodes, & Yardley, 2003, p. 21). Some acceptable submethodologies that might be placed under this definition include, but are not limited to, the following: critical hermeneutics, grounded theory, ethnography, participatory action research, phenomenological inquiry, autobiography (narrative study of lives), feminist research, narrative analysis, focus groups, and the case study.

A basic structure for this methodology would include, at a minimum, the following sections/chapters: Introduction, Literature Review, Methods (the structure of this section could vary significantly depending on the sub-methodology), Results/Analysis of the Findings, and Discussion. An acceptable management of the dissertation would include: an exhaustive review of the literature across all major and minor components of the study; a generally agreed upon acceptable number of subjects based on the type of study to the point of minimal data saturation; appropriately detailed analysis of results for the design of the study; a discussion section covering all major areas typical for this section (i.e., limitations of study, areas for future research, what was learned out of this study – linked back to original question and literature review as well as areas of professional/academic growth experienced by the student).

Typically, qualitative studies do not begin with a hypothesis to prove or disprove; instead, they begin with a well-defined area or experience to explore and understand. In the section explaining the methods of the study, students should describe the particular qualitative research paradigm to which they are adhering (e.g. phenomenology, ethnography, etc.) and the particular method(s) they will be utilizing (e.g. individual or group interviews, systematic observation, etc.). In addition, qualitative researchers generally explain how they will recruit participants and the process of building relationships with individuals and/or communities in this process. They often give special attention to explaining how they will locate participants who might share the experience of interest, and how the researcher will earn the trust of participants so as to gather rich and meaningful data. Because of the richness and very personal nature of the data that is generally obtained from participants, special attention is often given as well to how the researcher will protect the confidentiality of participants. Because of the greater investment of the participants in the research process, qualitative researchers also commonly explain how they will share the results of their analysis in a way that benefits, or at least brings no harm, to the participants. Specifically, in participatory action research, there are additional requirements of community member involvement in all aspects of the research design and implementation process.

In the section explaining the data analysis, students explain how they will find meaning in their data. This includes, for example, detailing how they will develop and use a consistent but meaningful coding system, or validate their analysis using additional judges, or present their analysis to the research participants for further refinement. In addition, students should include any use of qualitative software to assist in the data analysis process. It is also not uncommon for qualitative researchers to explain their own preconceptions about the experience they study, clarify their efforts to bracket these preconceptions so as not to unduly bias the research, and then after the study is completed make clear how they personally made sense of their own beliefs in light of their findings.

In the section discussing the results of the findings, qualitative researchers seek to present the voice and experience of the participants (or “co-researchers” in participatory action research) and to explain not only the implications of the study and its limitations, but also directions for those who will use or expand upon it. Qualitative research often ends with hypotheses and suggestions that other researchers (often in a subsequent quantitative study) can explore and test. Moreover, qualitative research can often serve as the basis for program and policy development.

Resources Qualitative

- Fischer, C. (2006). *Qualitative research methods for psychologists*. Burlington, MA: Academic Press.
- Camic, P., Rhodes, J.E., & Yardley, L. (Eds.). (2003). *Qualitative research in psychology: Expanding perspectives in methodology and design*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Saldana, J. (2013). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Willis, J.W. (2007). *Foundations of qualitative research: Interpretive and critical approaches*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

[Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis](#)

Participatory Feminism - <http://www.einaudi.cornell.edu/parfem/parfem.htm>

Participatory Action Research

- <http://www.aral.com.au/>
- http://carbon.ucdenver.edu/~mryder/itc/act_res.html
- Michelle Fine's work in the [Participatory Action Research](#) Collective

General Qualitative Research Resources:

[University of Georgia](#)

[The Qualitative Report](#)

[Division 27: Society for Community Research and Action](#)

Mixed Qualitative and Quantitative Study

This type of dissertation is appropriate for research questions in which both quantitative and qualitative research questions are embedded. Proponents of mixed research attempt to use a combination of methods that have complementary strengths and non-overlapping weaknesses. Mixed methods research has the potential to answer a broader range of research question because the researcher is not confined to a single method or approach.

Ostensibly, a researcher can use the strengths of one method to overcome the weaknesses of another method and can provide stronger evidence through convergence and corroboration of findings. The strengths of mixed methods are multiple, and there are five primary benefits of Mixed Methods research (Greene et al., 1987, 2007):

- **Triangulation.** The convergence and corroboration of multiple methods provide greater richness to obtained data.
- **Complementarity.** The elaboration and/or enhancement of results from one method with the findings from the other method.
- **Development.** It is not uncommon to utilize the findings of method to help develop the research question, hypotheses, sampling, etc. for the other method.
- **Initiation.** Seeks the discovery of paradox and contradiction, new perspectives of frameworks, and the recasting of questions or results from one method with questions from the other method.
- **Expansion.** Seeks to extend the breadth and range of inquiry by using different methods for different inquiry components.

There are also weaknesses of mixed methods research. It can be difficult to engage in substantial qualitative and quantitative research concurrently with limited resources and with one researcher. This is particularly true within the time constraints of the dissertation process. In addition, the researcher must be sufficiently versed in multiple methods and understand how to competently combine and interpret them.

Mixed method research designs are classified based on time order (concurrent vs. sequential) and paradigm emphasis (equal status vs. dominant status). Both quantitative and qualitative data are collected across different phases within one overall study, similar to conducting a small quantitative study and a qualitative study in one research project.

In the literature, mixed method research is often differentiated from mixed model research. In mixed model research, quantitative and qualitative approaches are mixed within or across the stages of the research process. The following are types of mixed model research:

- **Within-stage mixed model research.** Quantitative and qualitative approaches are mixed within one or more stages of the research. An example of within-stage mixed model research is the use of a questionnaire that included both open ended (qualitative) and closed ended questions (quantitative).
- **Across-stage mixed model research.** Quantitative and qualitative approaches are mixed across at least two stages of research. An example of across-stage mixed model research is a researcher who collects interview data (qualitative data collection) and

analyzes the data both qualitatively and quantitatively (e.g., frequency analysis of each type of response, reports of percentages and examination of relationships between sets of categories or variables).

Resources Mixed Method

- Bergman, M.M. (Ed.). (2008). *Advances in mixed methods research: Theories and applications*. London: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Creswell, J.W., & Plano Clark, V.L. (2011). *Designing and conducting mixed methods Research* (2nd ed.). London: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Greene, J.C., & Caracelli, V.J. (Eds.). (1997). *Advances in mixed-method evaluation: The challenges and benefits of integrating diverse paradigms*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Plano Clark, V.L., & Creswell, J.W. (Eds.). (2007). *The mixed methods reader*. London: Sage Publications, Inc.

Appendix A: Library Resources

Appendix A: Literature Searches Using Library Resources

Find more details and tip sheets on the library web site. Start on the [Introduction to Library Research](#) page:

Follow the basic steps of research:

Form the Research Topic

Research starts with a topic or research question. First, write down your topic idea and pull keywords and main ideas directly out of it to create a list of search terms. Second, brainstorm a list of synonyms and possible related terms and ideas to build the list. Third, visit the library homepage to find different resources to help with your research: chi.librarypass.org.

Choose the Library Resources

Your librarians recommend starting with the library catalog, [WorldCat Local](#). *WorldCat Local* is the best tool to start your research, and it delivers results from almost all of the library's research databases as well as the library's *print book and e-book collection, videos, test kits*, and provides links to the *full text of journal articles* contained within the individual databases.

As your familiarity with the individual databases develops, you'll identify database titles and journal titles that are good for your research. The full list of electronic research databases that the TCSPP Libraries provide access to can be found [here](#).

Each database accesses different journals, and while most have the similar filters, each has its own strengths. ProQuest is the library's largest database platform, and has an easy-to-use interface to link to databases including PsycINFO, PsycARTICLES, and more. ProQuest is also the company that publishes the most dissertations in the U.S., including those at TCSPP. The [ProQuest Dissertations and Theses](#) supplies access to dissertations and theses around the world. [SAGE](#) is the world's 5th largest journals publisher; TCSPP's subscription spans from 1999-present and includes more than 700 journals spanning the Humanities, Social Sciences, and Science, Technology, and Medicine.

Search the Library Resources to Gather Articles

Once you have planned your search and chosen a database to start, build your search using the "advanced search" tools within any research resource:

1. **Combine** search terms to build complex searches and use Boolean operators (and/or/not) to craft robust searches.
2. **Refine** your results using limiters (such as date, publication, etc.) to get more specific results. Or, expand your search as you go.
 - a. Be an expert: click on the hyperlinked subject terms in a database, which will take you to new searches and results.
3. **Browse** the subject terms using the toolbar on the left side of the resource.
4. **Locate more** scholarly resources by filtering results to only peer-reviewed journals, or selecting source types that are only academic journals.

Use these strategies for general internet searches, such as on Google Scholar!

Request Articles via Interlibrary Loan

If the full-text access to a resource is not available, the library participates in an inter-library loan program called [Illiad](#). It is a completely free service to request articles and book chapters to be electronically sent to you and books loaned to you.

Organize the citations

There are lots of ways to gather information. Once you have a list, you can manage everything using [RefWorks](#), a citation management tool. It is a place to store citations, either in folders grouped by subject, or by project. RefWorks also creates bibliographies with the click of a button.

Seek Answers to Your Questions!

The most important thing to remember is that TCSPP has plenty of resources to help – and librarians to help you manage all of it. Don't hesitate to email, call or visit the library in person with your research questions at library@thechicagoschoo.edu OR (312) 329-6630.

How to Start Your Research

at The Chicago School of Professional Psychology



Research starts with an idea or question



Start at the library homepage:
<http://library.thechicagoschool.edu/>



Find the one-stop search box in the middle of the screen, or click "Search our Catalog"



Formulate a plan and search strategy: what are your keywords?



Search your keywords and filter the results using the options on the left-side toolbar or use the "advanced search" tools.



Build your search by combining search terms with Boolean operators (and/or/not). This will provide you with a treasure trove of results.



Use the subject terms to refine your keywords, and repeat the search process



Use alternative search strategies, like searching any relevant authors or browsing relevant journals



Check in with the Library if you're stumped!



<http://library.thechicagoschool.edu/>
library@thechicagoschool.edu (312) 329-6630

Using the Library Catalog



The TCS Library Catalog— aka: *WorldCat Local (WCL)*:

- WorldCat Local is the new library catalog—a one-stop search tool to locate books, e-books, videos and articles! The search box can be found on the Library Research Databases page: <http://chi.librarypass.org/library-research-databases/>

- Locating books:

Type in your keywords, title or author in the search box. In the results list, you'll see icons for print books, e-Books, and articles in your result list. You also have the ability to limit to a type of material on the left hand side



ILLiad Quick Guide



To request materials through ILLiad, follow these easy steps:

- Log in to your ILLiad account. (Find ILLiad at this URL: <https://csopp.illiad.oclc.org/illiad/logon.html>).
- Don't have an ILLiad account? Click on the "First Time Users" link to create one.
- Once logged in, click on the appropriate link under "New Request", in the right hand menu to access the right form (see the screen shot below):
 - ⇒ Click on **"Photocopy"** to request a JOURNAL ARTICLE.
 - ⇒ Click on **"Book"** to request a FULL BOOK or DISSERTATION.
 - ⇒ Click on **"Book Chapter"** to request a SINGLE CHAPTER from a BOOK.
 - ⇒ Click on **"Other (Free text)"** to request other types of materials.

