Writing the DCoun Dissertation

Introduction

This Dissertation Guide is specific for the Doctorate of Counseling degree at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (MBTS). It will inform the reader of the specific requirements of the doctoral dissertation and form the basis for future discussion and planning during the DCoun doctoral seminar DR 32090 Dissertation Research Design and Statistics.

Beginning Thoughts

The path to writing a successful dissertation is paved with two stones with two different names. The name on the first stone is "plan ahead". Everyone has a busy schedule. It is imperative that you include in your schedule sufficient time to work methodically on your dissertation. The name on all the remaining stones is "perseverance". Regardless of the many and unsuspected challenges that present, resolve to follow your plan to completion. Remember that many start, but few finish.

Helpful Guidelines

Here are some guidelines. The following is not an exhaustive, but it is a helpful list.

1. A thesis is a hypothesis.

2. The DCoun Dissertation is a lengthy, formal document that tests your thesis.

3. The important adjectives that describe a dissertation are original and substantial.

4. The scientific method means starting with a hypothesis, then designing and implementing a study to collect data in order to test this hypothesis.

5. The heart of a dissertation is critical thinking about experimental data. Analysis and concepts form the heart of the work.

6. A dissertation concentrates on principles: it states the lessons learned, and not merely the facts behind them.

7. Generally, all statements in a dissertation are supported either by a reference to published scientific literature or by original work.

8. Every sentence in a dissertation must be complete and correct in a grammatical sense. A dissertation must satisfy the strict rules of formal grammar. The dissertation does not contain in appropriate contractions, colloquialisms, slurs, undefined technical jargon, hidden jokes, or slang. The writing in a dissertation must be clear.

9. Each statement in your dissertation must be correct and defensible in a logical and scientific sense. The discussions in your dissertation must satisfy the most stringent rules of logic applied to science.

What You Should Learn From Writing the Dissertation:

1. All counselors need to communicate discoveries; the DCoun dissertation contributed to the professional counseling body of knowledge with other scientists.

2. Writing a dissertation affirms that you are a scholar. That is, you are able to think deeply, to organize technical discussion, to muster arguments that will convince other scholars, and to follow rules for rigorous, formal presentation of the arguments and discussion.

Definitions and Terminology:

1. You must define every technical term used in the dissertation.

2. When using a defined technical term, it is used in one and only one sense throughout the dissertation.

Terms and Phrases to Avoid:

1. Adverbs: They are overly used. Use strong words instead.

2. Jokes or puns: They have no place in a formal document.

3. A scientific dissertation does not make moral judgments. Rule out bad, good, nice, terrible, and stupid. Instead use ``incorrect/correct'' to refer to factual correctness or errors. Use precise words or phrases to assess quality (e.g., ``method A requires less computation than method B''). In general, one should avoid all qualitative judgments.

4. Colloquialisms: Lots of, kind of, type of, something like, just about, number of

5. Generally, use the third person when writing and avoid language such as "I feel…" or "I think…" If the occasion arises where the first person writing voice is appropriate, use the following: "This writer…" or "This candidate…" etc.

Voice:

1. Use active constructions. For example, write ``the BDI measured the patient's depression level'' instead of ``the depression of the patient was measured by the BDI''.

Tense:

1. Write in the present tense, except in the case of writing the initial dissertation proposal. For example, write ``The system writes a page to the disk and then uses the frame...'' instead of ``The system will use the frame after it wrote the page to disk...''

Dissertation Proposal:

The dissertation proposal consists of the first three chapters in the five-chapter dissertation. It is a proposal and is written in more of a future tense.

Abstract

The abstract is a one paragraph, brief summary of the study and its findings. This will include a short summary of the study topic, participants, research design, and major findings. It will be a minimum of 150 words and no longer than 250 words.

Chapter 1: Introduction

- Background of the Problem

- Statement of the Problem

- Purpose of the Study

- Theoretical Framework

- Research Hypothesis(es)

- Importance of the Study

- Scope of the Study

- Definition of Terms

- Summary

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

This section of the dissertation is where the candidate will review the current and classical literature relevant to his or her chosen dissertation topic. Sources will include scholarly books, journals, and other professional publications. This review will inform the reader of the clear basis for the present topic and lead the reader to an understanding of how the dissertation topic adds to

the current body of literature. Literature references follow the format called for in the Turabian (2013) style manual Chapters 18 and 19, which conforms to APA style.

Chapter 3: Research Methods

- Research Design

- Participants

- Instrumentation

- Research Procedures and Pilot Testing

- Data Analysis

- Assumptions of the Study

- Limitations of the Study

- Summary

Chapter 4: Research Findings

In this section, the candidate will report the results of the study using standard methods of displaying data according to the Turabian (2013) manual.

Chapter 5: Conclusions, Discussion, and Suggestions for Future Research

- Summary of Results

- Discussion

- Conclusions

- Suggestions for Future Research