

University *of* La Verne

Doctor of Business Administration

Dissertation Guidelines

College of Business

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Introduction

The quality of a dissertation reflects the individual candidate, the Doctor of Business Administration Program (DBA), and the University of La Verne. For this reason, the faculty shares your commitment to make the dissertation process a successful experience. The following guidelines aim to reflect accurately the dissertation process, with the understanding that certain situations might require information not contained in these guidelines. If you find that your questions are not answered in here, please contact the College of Business.

The guidelines will assist you in the design and development of the study and facilitate the content aspects of manuscript preparation. Questions dealing with style, format, copyrights, and other technical requirements of manuscript preparation are answered in the approved style manual, the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, Seventh Edition (2020) (<https://apastyle.apa.org>).

The dissertation guidelines will provide answers to common questions such as:

- How do I select a dissertation committee chair?
- How to select other committee members?
- What is the process for completing the dissertation?
- When is the oral defense of the dissertation scheduled?

Please contact your Academic Advisor if you have additional questions.

Why the dissertation?

Almost every doctoral candidate raises this question. The answer is that the dissertation process is a unique method of demonstrating personal and professional growth, both generally and in a specific area of study. The developmental and growth benefits, which the dissertation process offers, are presented here in the form of competencies that doctoral candidates are expected to be able to demonstrate:

- Independence of thought and action in the selection of a significant research topic.
- A mastery of the literature, theory, concepts, and research in a specifically selected area of study.
- An understanding of alternative research methods and designs and a perceptive judgment of their relative appropriateness to a given research problem.
- Proficiency in the use of at least one recognized research method and the ability to defend its pertinence of application to a research problem.

- The ability to research complex ideas objectively and communicate results knowledgably and clearly.
- The ability to contribute significantly to the knowledge and/or practice of business administration.

The dissertation requirement is viewed differently in programs leading to applied degrees, such as the DBA, than it is in those which award a Ph.D. The distinction in focus between the two is discussed in the “Handbook of Accreditation of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges,” as follows:

“Faculty and students in Ph.D. programs are actively involved in original research contributing to generalizable knowledge. Such involvement is also present to a significant extent in disciplinary Master’s degree programs. Student in professional Doctorate programs are educated in the research process and involved in research. While this may be original research similar to that expected of Ph.D. programs, it may alternatively include applied research that supports the advancement of the profession” (p. 30).

The statement implies that the candidate in an applied doctoral program such as the DBA has a broader range of options in meeting the dissertation requirements than does the candidate in more traditional programs leading to the Ph.D. It is not uncommon for graduate programs in the social sciences to have preferences (stated or unstated) for specific types of methodological studies. Some fields, by their very nature, lean heavily toward a specific scientific method. However, the very word “applied” in the applied type of doctoral program suggests the need to be flexible in one’s ability to meet a situation. Therefore, there is no specific methodological bias inherent in the study of business administration.

Managers often encounter problems that require competence in a variety of research methods; managers sometimes must judge the applicability of reported research studies, as well as prepare statistical reports regarding them. They often must critique testing strategies or evaluate the soundness of proposed research projects and they must even be able to develop and pilot new programs to meet broadening needs.

Therefore, in selecting the direction and focus of a dissertation, you should commence by identifying the problem you wish to resolve or the contribution you wish to make. Then you must select the proper research methodology to fit the subject, rather than attempting to make your subject fit a predetermined research method.

There is also a significant advantage in identifying a research problem early in the program. Even though you may not begin formal steps in the dissertation process until the second half of the second year, an early awareness of your research interests will allow you to direct much of your study and preparation in other program components, specifically toward the dissertation. This will save time and add a sense of continuity to the overall process.

The Dissertation Process

The dissertation process moves according to the following sequence:

1. Appointment of a Dissertation Committee Chair (Chair Request Form)
2. Dissertation Committee (Dissertation Form 1)
3. Approval of Study Proposal (Dissertation Form 2)
4. IRB approval: Institutional Review Board application Using IRBManager
5. Approval of Oral Defense (Dissertation Form 3)
6. Oral Defense Status (Dissertation Form 4)

6.1 Steps to be Taken by the Candidate after the Oral Defense

7. Final Dissertation Approval

These sequential steps must be followed in order. **Appropriate forms to mark each step are available online in the DBA Community on D2L.** The candidate, not the Committee Chair, is responsible for transmitting all forms and appropriate documentation to the Graduate Academic Services as the candidate proceeds through the various steps of the dissertation process. Out of sequence forms will not be accepted by the Graduate Academic Services. Form 3, for example, will not be processed unless an appropriately signed Form 2 is found in the candidate's file. The candidate must follow this process carefully, as failure to do so could result in unnecessary delays and frustrations.

1. Appointment of Dissertation Committee Chair

The appointment of a Dissertation Committee Chair is done at the end of the second year of coursework. Students fill out the Committee Chair Request Form listing both a first and second choice and providing a short description as to why they are interested in working with the selected faculty member. The form is then reviewed by the DBA Program Director, who will approve or deny the request based on the following factors: faculty availability, appropriateness of fit, time concerns, and faculty acceptance of the request. The dissertation committee chair must meet the following two criteria:

1. The faculty must have an earned doctorate degree and holds a full-time position in the College of Business.
2. The faculty has at least one research publication in the past six years.

To explore the scholarship and creative works of University of La Verne faculty, please visit the [Research Works profiles](#) hosted by Wilson Library.

A student who wishes to select a committee chair who does not meet the above criteria must submit a written request to the DBA Director for review and approval. The Dean must also approve exceptions to this requirement.

2. Dissertation Committee (Dissertation Form 1)

A dissertation committee consists of three members: the dissertation committee chair and two additional committee members. After a student has been assigned a Committee Chair, s/he should consult with the Committee Chair to select other dissertation committee members. Any ULV faculty with appropriate earned doctorate degree is eligible to serve in a dissertation committee. On occasion, one of the committee members can be a faculty member from a different institution of higher education or an active practitioner who has an earned doctorate from a regionally accredited institution. Each committee member will note their willingness to serve on the dissertation committee by signing Dissertation Form 1, which is then sent to your academic advisor and Graduate Academic Services. Once the committee is finalized and approved, Graduate Academic Services will send the student a letter designating the approved committee. Students must coordinate with the Committee Chair to obtain approval and signatures for Form 1 and for all subsequent forms, as needed.

Approved committee members who are not members of the University's standing faculty will receive the normal stipend paid by the University for serving on a dissertation committee; however, any and all arrangements and fees related to their participation in the oral defense, such as travel and accommodation fees, will be the responsibility of the student, not the University.

The Dean and Program Director reserve the right to realign committee assignments based upon faculty load and availability. Consequently, you should not assume that the committee you selected will automatically be approved. Students who need help or suggestions about forming a committee and/or finding committee members should first consult with their Committee Chair to identify potential members from ULV or other external candidates.

3. Approval of Dissertation Proposal (Dissertation Form 2)

After the committee has been determined, the student writes a dissertation proposal, which is to be approved by the committee. The approval process consists of two components:

1. Written Component: Submission of a dissertation proposal document (Chapters 1–3) that clearly outlines the research problem, literature review, and proposed methodology.
2. Oral Defense: Participation in a formal proposal defense, during which the student will present their proposal and respond to questions from all committee members.

Following the defense, the student must address all requested revisions from the committee. The revised proposal should then be resubmitted to the committee for final review and approval. Once approved, form 2 should be submitted to Graduate Academic Services and cc academic advisor.

Students may move to Institutional Review Board (IRB) submission immediately AFTER their Form 2 is approved.

4. IRB approval: Institutional Review Board Application Using IRBManager

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is an institutional committee created to protect the rights and welfare of human research subjects. The committee is responsible for reviewing research designs (protocols) involving human subjects. The IRB is also responsible for providing training on the protection of human subjects in research. Additional information can be accessed at <https://laverne.edu/irb/>

It is important to begin the process of securing IRB approval well in advance of when you will need to start your research. IRB reviews can take time to complete. You must receive the approval letter signed by the IRB Chair before data collection can begin.

Training

Before you submit an application and research protocol for IRB approval, you must first complete the University's human subjects training. A human subjects training certificate must be on file for all individuals conducting human subjects research (see <https://laverne.edu/irb/training-required/>).

Human subjects training applies only to human subjects research. Training needed for other types of research can be identified by contacting the Institutional Review Board at 909.448.4564 or irb@laverne.edu

IRB Applications and IRBManager

All applications must be submitted through IRBManager. Your dissertation chair will discuss with you the different categories of review and help you decide which is most appropriate for your research. According to data, most DBA students at La Verne qualify for an exempt review category. (<https://laverne.edu/irb/does-my-study-qualify-for-exempt-review/>)

All protocols must be accompanied by documents demonstrating how you, the researcher, will gain consent of subjects and how the confidentiality of subjects will be protected. Copies of recruitment materials and consent forms must accompany your application. There is a template for a consent form on the IRB website. While you do not have to follow this template format exactly, your consent form must include the same information, in roughly the same order. Copies of all research instruments must also be submitted.

Please review the following information to assist you with:

- Preparing your IRB Application: <https://laverne.edu/irb/submitting-your-irb-application/>
- Logging into IRB Manager: <https://laverne.edu/irb/irbmanager-basics/>

The IRB Review Process

After you have submitted your IRB protocol on IRB Manager, you have two possible routes to follow. If the research requires a full IRB review, it must be scheduled for a review by the full membership of University of La Verne IRB. If the protocol requires other levels of review, that is, exempt or expedited, it may be sent directly to the IRB Chair for review. The University IRB consists of faculty members from each College. The IRB meets monthly to review protocols. It is important to submit your application before the deadline for that month's review.

The Flowcharts of the IRB Review Process can be accessed at:

<https://laverne.edu/irb/wpcontent/uploads/sites/28/2016/06/Flowchart-for-ULV-IRB-Manager-ApplicationSubmission.pdf>

Please consult the Meeting and Operation Schedule: <https://laverne.edu/irb/irb-monthly-committee-meetings/>

Expectations of La Verne IRB Review Timeline

A well-prepared exempt or expedited IRB application can take up to 2 weeks to be approved. If your study requires a full review, it can take 4-8 weeks to be approved as it must be decided upon at a University IRB monthly meeting. Applications that are correctly completed tend to be processed quickly.

Most likely your application will require more than one set of revisions at all stages of IRB review in order to clarify content and address reviewer comments. Any applications not approved within 6 months of initial submission will need to be resubmitted and re-reviewed by the appropriate area of the IRB as a new application. Please plan accordingly.

La Verne Turnaround Time policy for turnaround times: <https://laverne.edu/irb/wp-content/uploads/sites/28/2018/08/La-Verne-IRB-Turnaround-Time.pdf>

Checking the Status of your IRB Application

To check the status of your application in IRBManager: <https://laverne.edu/irb/check-the-status-of-your-application>

IRB Approval Letter

When you receive your approval letter from the IRB, save a copy of the letter for future reference. If you later submit any amendments to your application to the IRB, a copy of the approved amendments should be saved as well. **Doctoral students will need to include a copy**

of the IRB approval letter in the appendix of their dissertation and specifically list it in your table of contents.

After you obtain IRB approval, you may begin your research. However, approval is generally valid only for a maximum of one year. If your research extends beyond one year, even if you are only analyzing data from the study, you must receive approval from the IRB to continue. If you change any aspect of your research methodology, you must file an amendment to your approved application. The form and instructions for submitting a request for continuation or an amendment are available at the IRB website. It is critical that you obtain approval for any changes to an IRB protocol prior to enacting the changes. If, for example, you have not received approval for changes to your dissertation study, you will not be able to pass your dissertation defense.

IRB Members and Contact Information

For a complete list of IRB members, please visit <https://laverne.edu/irb/irb-members/>

Email: irb@laverne.edu

Phone: 909.448.4564

Staff members are usually quicker at responding to email than voice mail.

5. Approval of Oral Defense (Dissertation Form 3)

The candidates work with their Committee Chair on writing and revising drafts until the dissertation chair agrees that the dissertation has reached the final draft stage and is ready for oral defense. After receiving approval from their Dissertation Chair, students must contact the other two members of the committee to coordinate a date and time for their oral defense. Students must provide their committee with at least two weeks to read the final dissertation draft. At that point, the committee signs the Approval for Oral Defense (Form 3).

Form 3, along with Oral Defense Announcement, and Dissertation Abstract should then be submitted to the DBA Program Director for review and approval.

The Final Defense may be held in person or remotely (i.e. Zoom, WebEx, etc.). Students should consult with their Dissertation Chair when making this decision. In the event of a pandemic or other catastrophic events, all final defenses will be held remotely.

1. Remote Final Defense

It is the Dissertation Chair's responsibility to set up the meeting link for any remote Final Defenses and serve as the meeting host controlling breakout rooms, etc.

2. In-Person Final Defense

It is the student's responsibility to make all logistical arrangements associated with the in-person oral defense. These arrangements must be completed at least two weeks in advance of

the defense. Never assume that equipment will be available in the room scheduled for the presentation. Logistical arrangements may include:

- In conjunction with your dissertation chair, schedule the date, time, and room for the oral defense. It is preferable for the oral defense to be held on the University campus but not necessary if there is a need to do otherwise.
- In conjunction with your dissertation chair, arrange for all audiovisual equipment needs. The equipment needed might include overhead projector, screen, whiteboard, chalkboard, slide projector, video monitor/and player, and/or computer equipment.
- Planning for approved committee members who are not members of the University's standing faculty related to their participation in the oral defense, such as travel and accommodation. Any fee associated with their participation will be the responsibility of the student, not the University.
- Ensuring that all electronic files and photocopies are accurate and ready before the presentation – resources needed to create additional copies may not be available to the candidate on the day of the oral defense.

The following table lists the venues at the University of La Verne where oral defenses are frequently held. The table includes the following information: seating capacity for each location, equipment available in the room, rules governing food and drinks in the room, and the contact person or method for scheduling the room. It is the candidate's responsibility in conjunction with the Committee Chair to ensure that rooms and/or equipment are available for dissertation defense.

Location	Capacity	Equipment	Food Allowed?	Contact
CBPM 116 Conference Room	8	PC/Projector	Yes	Margaret Reyna 909.448.4962 mreyna2@laverne.edu
Wilson Library Room 160	16	PC/Projector	Yes	https://laverne.libcal.com/reserve/160

When all arrangements have been made, the candidate must submit Form 3 to GAS and cc Academic advisor along with:

- Application for Graduation Form and graduation fees

- Electronic copies of the dissertation abstract and oral defense announcement to Graduate Academic Services and cc your academic advisor, prior to the date chosen for defense.
- Purchase Cap and Gown by April 1st of the year if you plan to attend commencement.

If you plan to attend the spring commencement, May 1st is the last day for turning in Form 3 and all other accompanying documents to Graduate Academic Services.

6. Oral Defense Status (Dissertation Form 4)

The College of Business will distribute the date and announcement of the oral defense among faculty members in the College. Students may invite family, friends, and other guests to observe the Oral Defense proceedings at the discretion of their Dissertation Chair.

At the defense the candidate should provide to dissertation chair:

- Dissertation Form 4
- Signature Page

A unanimous vote of all committee members is required to pass the oral defense. In cases of disagreement among members, the outcome will be determined by a majority vote of the members (i.e. two of three committee members voting for a particular outcome).

An outcome must be reached following the defense. All dissertation committee members must sign Form 4 at conclusion of the defense. There are five possible outcomes of the defense:

1. Passed, with no revisions. All committee members sign the signature page at this point.
2. Passed, with minor revisions. The second and third committee members sign the signature page. The chair withholds his or her signature and retains the signature page until all revisions are satisfactorily completed.
3. Passed, with major revisions. All committee members withhold their signature until the student has satisfactorily completed revisions. In this case, the student should retain the signature page and obtain signatures from each committee member once that member is satisfied with the revisions.
4. Continued to another oral defense date, due to the significance of the required changes. All committee members withhold their signature until the new oral defense date.
5. Failed, with recommended follow-up action. A student may fail the dissertation final defense based on the quality of their manuscript, the quality of their oral defense, or both. If the student fails the defense, none of the dissertation committee members sign the signature page. Failing the defense will result in dismissal from the DBA program.

6.1 Steps to be Taken by the Candidate after the Oral Defense

1. Immediately after the oral defense, submit the signed copy of Form 4 (without Dean's signature) to academic advisor.

2. Make the changes in your dissertation as agreed by your committee at the oral defense.
 - If the student's dissertation required minor revisions, once the Dissertation Chair is satisfied that the student has made the necessary revisions, the Dissertation Chair will sign off on the student's signature page.
 - If the student's dissertation required major revisions, the student must make the required revisions and return a revised copy to all committee members for review. The committee members will notify the student once they are satisfied with the revisions and are willing to sign off on the signature page. It is the student's responsibility to secure signatures from all members.
3. Deliver the signature page (without Dean's signature) to academic advisor.
4. The academic advisor will forward the dissertation form 4 and signature page to Dean for final approval and signature, and then to Graduate Academic Services.
5. At this point, the candidate will need to email your dissertation to GAS at gas@laverne.edu to set up the APA style review. GAS must have received the signed Form 4 and the signature page before the manuscript can be released to the APA reviewer.
6. Expect that the APA style reviewer will have your dissertation for about four weeks. Graduate Academic Services will communicate with the candidate if revisions are needed. In that case, Graduate Academic Services will return the dissertation to the candidate for required corrections after the initial reading by the APA style reviewer. If a second review is needed due to major corrections, a \$100 dissertation review fee will be required before resubmission. Please note that the fee increases for a third or fourth round of review.
7. After the APA checks are completed and paid for, Graduate Academic Services will give the candidate instructions for electronic manuscript submission to ProQuest and any additional documents that will be required at this point, such as final dissertation fees, copyright form and fee, etc.

7. Final Dissertation Approval

This completes the dissertation coursework. The doctoral degree will be posted if all financial obligations to the University are fulfilled and all other program requirements have been met. Please keep in mind that all the above steps must be completed within one-year from the date of the oral defense, or the student could be subject to a new oral defense as well as an oral re-examination fee equal to one unit of tuition.

Policy for Participation in Commencement Ceremony

Prior to May 1st of the year of Commencement:

- Completion of all program components and requirements.
- Submission of Dissertation Form 3 requesting approval for the oral defense of the dissertation and required documents.
- Be in good academic and financial standing.

Policies Governing Continuous Registration, Inactive Status, and Leave of Absence

Students will be considered for Advancement to Candidacy after the approval of study proposal. When a student meets the criteria established by the College of Business, the college will notify Graduate Academic Services, who in turn will inform the student specifying action on the Application for Advanced Candidacy and outstanding program requirements.

Continuous Enrollment (CE)

Doctoral students will register for DBA 699C (Dissertation I) for their 7th and 8th semesters. Students who have not completed the dissertation requirements at the end of the 8th semester will be required to register for DBA 699D (Dissertation II) each succeeding semester. Continuous registration is mandatory until all requirements for the degree have been fulfilled (including the periods of dissertation review required by your committee and the APA readers), approval from the Dean is received, and the degree is posted.

Students must have finished their full dissertation process before 8/31 of their 3rd year to avoid paying CE in the following fall semester. For students who registered CE in fall, but plan to avoid paying for CE in the following Spring semester, they must have finished their full dissertation process before 12/31.

Inactive Status

Doctoral students who allow their registration to lapse for two consecutive years will be placed on inactive status. This means that the grades for DBA 699C and DBA 699D will be changed from IP (In Progress) to NCR (No Credit). The Dissertation Committee, if constituted, will dissolve and all other University services will cease. Students seeking reinstatement need to contact Graduate Academic Services at 909.448.4011 or gas@laverne.edu.

Leave of Absence from the DBA Program

Doctoral students may request a leave of absence if: 1) the student is in good academic standing, and 2) the reasons for the request are financial issues, medical problems and/or military duties. Requests for leave of absence must be done in writing and would need the approval of the Program Director. With a leave of absence, a student may be absent from the University no more than two semesters (consecutive or alternate).

During the leave of absence, the student is placed in inactive status. This action stops the maximum period allowed for completion of the program. No tuition will be charged and, while on leave of absence, the student will not receive any academic or administrative services from the University's faculty or staff members. Students must clear all financial obligations before a leave of absence can be granted. Requests for retroactive leave of absence will not be considered.

La Verne Guidelines for the Use of the APA Publication Manual

The Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, seventh edition has been approved as the style manual to be used by Doctoral students at the University of La Verne. Students need to be knowledgeable of the contents of the manual as they write their dissertation.

Producing the Dissertation

The University of La Verne has specific requirements that vary from APA. Those include: margins, font, CHAPTER HEADINGS, and inserting tables and figures into the text of the dissertation.

The APA guidelines defer to university policies and procedures for dissertation formatting. Please review “Seventh Edition APA/ULV Guide” for detailed instruction.

College of Business AI Policy And AI Use Guide¹

Students must ensure that all work submitted for their dissertation is their original work. Failure to disclose AI use or misuse of AI tools may constitute academic misconduct and be subject to the university's disciplinary policies.

AI Policy

The following guidelines are established in the College of Business regarding the use of AI tools:

1. You are encouraged to use AI tools for enhancing your learning experience, including research, brainstorming, and improving writing skills. However, avoid outsourcing your entire learning process to AI.
2. All work submitted must be your own original work. If AI tools are used, they should be properly cited, and the extent of their use should be clearly indicated:
<https://columbiacollegeca.libguides.com/c.php?g=713274&p=5355771>
3. To ensure complete transparency in your use of AI, acknowledging the specific tools used and how they contributed to the final work by:
 - Including copies of AI-generated content in the Appendix section.
 - Stating the prompt you used and including relevant AI responses.

APA Citation Requirements

General Format for References:

- Author: Company or creator of the tool—e.g., ChatGPT, Perplexity
- Year: Year the version was released
- Title: Name of the AI tool or model (include version info if available)
- Type: [Type of AI Model]
- URL: Link to the AI tool or specific content

Sample in-text citation for ChatGPT:

When given a follow-up prompt of “What is a more accurate representation?” the ChatGPT generated text indicated that “different brain regions work together to support various cognitive processes” and “the functional specialization of different regions can change in response to experience and environmental factors” (OpenAI, 2024).

Sample reference for ChatGPT:

OpenAI. (2024). *ChatGPT* (Mar 14 version) [Large language model].
<https://chat.openai.com/chat>

¹ Modified based on the COB AI Policy