

Appendix FF. Sample Abstract

Abstract

The Qualitative Dissertation Experience:

Issues and Challenges That Impact Successful Completion

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Research indicates that significant numbers of people in doctoral programs complete all the course requirements, yet they do not go on to produce the dissertation. This qualitative case study was designed to explore with a sample of doctoral candidates their perceptions of why they have not managed to complete their dissertations. The rationale for this study emanates from the researchers' desire to uncover ways to encourage and help students complete their dissertations. It was the writers' assumption that increased understanding of the research process and development of the skills needed to conduct research and write a dissertation would reduce the numbers of students who have completed all-but-dissertation (ABD) requirements and increase the potential for greater numbers of students to attain a doctoral degree. The purposefully selected sample was composed of 20 doctoral candidates who were drawn from a range of doctoral programs at eight universities across the United States. The primary data collection method was in-depth interviews. Supportive methods included survey, critical incidents, and a focus group. The data were coded and organized according to the research questions. Analysis and interpretation of findings were organized by way of three analytic categories that were based on the study's conceptual framework: (a) relationship between course work and students' ability to complete the dissertation, (b) perceptions of *what* students needed to learn and *how* they acquired the learning they needed, and (c) supports and barriers influencing students' progress. This research revealed that course work often does not prepare students to conduct research and write their dissertations. Therefore, students attempt to learn what they need to know by being self-reliant and by reaching out in dialogue with colleagues, rather than through more formal means. The lack of good, timely, and consistent advisement is experienced as a major barrier standing in the way of students' progress. Recommendations are offered for doctoral program administrators and faculty, for current and prospective doctoral students, and for further research possibilities. Given that there are multiple factors that affect attrition rates and acknowledging that these vary across universities, the recommendations put forth should be considered for their appropriateness on an individual basis.

Word count: 350

Note 1: Abstract is presented as a single paragraph with no indentations.

Note 2: Typing is double spaced.