

CLSC Dissertation/Thesis Proposal- Comprehensive Exam

The format of your written element of your Comprehensive Examination is the first chapters of your thesis dissertation up to the Results Chapter. Therefore, it includes the introduction and problem statement, review, critique and synthesis of the literature review, hypothesis(es), Research Questions, Specific Aims, the conceptual framework/theory and the proposed methods.

Criteria for Assessment of Dissertation Proposals During the Comprehensive Examination

1. Introduction and Statement of the Problem
 - Does the introduction provide a general overview of the issues surrounding the study proposed (part of the study rationale)
 - Is the problem under investigation clearly stated?
 - Is there evidence to demonstrate the significance of the study?
 - Are important terms and concepts defined?
 - Are assumptions clearly stated?
 - Are major assumptions that lay the groundwork for the study articulated?
2. Literature Review
 - Is the study grounded in a larger body of work/research?
 - Is the review/literature current and representative of the related work in the area?
 - Are the related studies critically appraised and the gaps clearly articulated?
 - Does the review provide a clear rationale for the study and the gaps that are addressed by the study?
 - Is the literature review well-structured/organized through the use of sub-headings and graphics/images, when appropriate?
3. Hypothesis/Hypotheses, Research Questions, Specific Aims
 - Do the specific aims, hypothesis(es) and/or research questions support/aligned with the problem statement, background and literature review?
 - Do hypothesis(es) and/or research questions contain essential details such as PICOTS (population, intervention, comparison, intervention, time and setting)?
 - Are they written that imply responses more complex than "Yes/No"
4. Conceptual Framework/Theory

- Does the proposal provide a conceptual framework that unites the proposal and provides support for the approach and variables? (This can be a separate chapter or part of the Methods Chapter)

5. Methods

- Is the study design explicitly identified and described and is it appropriate to address the hypothesis(es) and/or research questions posed?
- Are the sample and participants fully described?
- Is the sampling and recruitment plans clearly described?
- Is there a good discussion of sample size and if appropriate sample size estimation with power calculation?
- Are data collection procedures fully explicated and appropriate hypothesis(es) and/or research questions posed?
- Are analytical procedures (stats, handling of missing data, etc) fully explicated and appropriate to address hypothesis(es) and/or research questions posed?
- Are the merits (validity, reliability, responsiveness) of instruments/ procedures/protocols described clearly?
- Are anticipated problems and possible solutions discussed?
- Are the appropriate ethical and regulatory approvals included?
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6. General

- Does the proposal demonstrate a high quality of written expression?
- Is the proposal cohesive and coherent?