

Georgia State University
Department of Psychology Dissertation Guidelines

The Graduate Program Committee is providing this statement to aid students in producing a dissertation that will satisfy the technical and stylistic requirements of the Department of Psychology and the College of Arts and Sciences. The Department of Psychology requires that some portion of the dissertation must be presented in a form that is appropriate for submission of the manuscript to a journal. Either the literature review, the research study per se, or both should be in form that is appropriate for submission.

The general style guide for the dissertation is the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (most current edition), but the requirements of the College of Arts and Sciences also must be satisfied. The requirements of the College of Arts and Sciences concern the quality of paper, the margins, preliminary pages (title page, table of contents, et cetera), and pagination. The content and form of each of the major sections of the dissertation are described below.

Currently, the department accepts two different styles of dissertation formats:

Format 1:

Abstract. The abstract for the dissertation must be no more than 350 words.

Chapter 1. In the first chapter, you should provide a thorough review of the relevant research and theories that are the basis for the research that you performed. The focus should be on integrating the research and theories to provide a justification for the research that you performed rather than on the details of previous research. You should include a statement of the goals, questions, and hypotheses for the research that you performed.

Chapter 2. In the method chapter, you should describe the relevant details of the method that you employed in the research. In general, you should provide sufficient information to allow a knowledgeable reader to replicate your research. Normally, you should include a description of the participants, the material used (including tests or questionnaires), and the procedure.

Chapter 3. In the results chapter, you should present the results, including statistical analyses. However, the focus should be on the data rather than on the analyses, and you may use tables and figures to provide a summary of the data. The tables and figures in the dissertation should be presented on the page on which they first are mentioned or on the immediately following page. In contrast, for a manuscript submitted for publication, the tables and figures should be presented at the end of the manuscript. Tangential results and supplemental analyses may be presented in appendixes.

Chapter 4. In the discussion chapter, you should interpret the results that you presented in Chapter 3. You should state the relation of the findings to the goals, questions, and hypotheses that you stated in Chapter 1. You should discuss the implications of the research for the relevant theories and for applications. You may discuss the strengths, weaknesses, and limitations of the study, but it is neither necessary nor advisable to discuss every conceivable problem with the research.

References. In the list of references, you should include every reference that is cited in the text and should not include any references that are not cited in the text. The format for references as described in the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (most current edition) must be followed rigorously.

These guidelines are for a dissertation based on a single experiment or study, and modifications will be needed for dissertations involving multiple experiments or studies. Ultimately, the student, the chair of the dissertation committee, and the dissertation committee should select a format that is appropriate for the research.

Format 2

The European dissertation contains a first chapter that consists of a thorough synthetic review of the literature of the type we might be familiar with in *Psychology Bulletin*. The next chapter or chapters consists of copies of (a) published papers, (b) manuscripts in press, (c) manuscripts submitted, and/or (d) manuscripts in preparation. Because they may have been published, submitted, or targeted for different journals with different journal styles, the chapters may not all be formatted in the same style (e.g., they may or may not be in APA style). As is found in published papers, each chapter would have an Introduction, Methods, Results, and Discussion section. The number of these chapters, of course, will vary according to the publication rate of the subfield of Psychology in general, and of the researcher and mentor, specifically. The final chapter also has a summary/review-type style; however, it is written from a more global perspective. That is, it answers the question, “How does this work fit into the big picture?” This chapter most likely will have a speculative quality to it and may entertain the directions for future research on the topic by the author or by other investigators. This final chapter is not a recapitulation of the middle chapters. This chapter offers the author the unique opportunity to speculate without the fetters that constrain typical research papers.

modified and approved by the faculty September, 14, 2007