

Dear Doctoral Student:

Welcome to Educational Leadership Studies! I have been assigned as your advisor. During the next few semesters you will meet your professors and be introduced to educational leadership as a field of study.

Your first question should be "Where do I start?" As you take your first 12-15 hours, we will plan your program of studies. You will present this plan to your committee in a two hour meeting. This program constitutes your plan for the major, minor, and foundation areas for your remaining coursework, as approved by your committee. Once you have your program of studies, you will take those courses listed. Any change must be approved by your committee.

In preparation for our first meeting, begin to think about:

- your career goals and time lines,
- an appropriate minor,
- committee members
- scheduling 2 consecutive semesters of 9 credits of residency,
- preliminary ideas for a dissertation, and
- the value of an internship, if not an administrator.

You may also want to read other documents on this site.

I am most accessible first by email, and then by phone calls or meetings, since I maintain a focused schedule of selected days in Morgantown. My voice mail will give that semester's office schedule. Since I am on a 9 month appointment with the university, I choose to do research in the summer. However, I do hold selected hours to be of service to students. These days will be posted on summer email, voice mail and my door. If you will be working on comps, a prospectus, or dissertation during the summer, we should make special arrangements for these times prior to May 15.

Good luck as you begin your new commitment to providing leadership to the public schools or education-related agency in your state. I hope your doctoral experience will be enjoyable and challenging!

Best wishes,

Helen M. Hazi, Professor  
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## What does Doctoral Study mean?

According to the Random House Dictionary (1983) a community is defined as a group of people living in somewhat close association, and usually under common rules. Doctoral students in Educational Leadership Studies are such a group who share the experiences of working towards the highest degree in the land, by learning about the members of their community, and by locating themselves in that milieu through the dissertation.

In my opinion, doctoral study is:

- disciplined inquiry that

involves both a survey and in-depth study of classical and contemporary scholars,

provides historical, legal, and theoretical perspectives on concepts, problems and dilemmas of practice through research, and

helps students belong to a community.

- a transformative experience that

involves course work, comprehensives, and a dissertation that helps to find one's voice and place in the community.

- a scholarly, rigorous, creative endeavor where the student is expected to become an expert in a body of theory and its research in order to propose and conduct original research that will make a contribution to the discipline.

The dissertation was such an exciting time of learning for me. It became the basis for a career of research and for a process of continuous learning. As a university professor, research has been my vehicle for promotion and national recognition. I was able to build upon both the topic and design of my dissertation to continue a law and policy focus in my writing, teaching, and service. Doing research has also become the way that I now learn. The topics that I write on are those that I want to learn most about. Not only was the dissertation a time to learn skills and to discover new knowledge, but it was also a transformative experience that is still an important part of my professional life.

---Helen M. Hazi, Ph.D.  
Professor of Educational Leadership  
West Virginia University

Dissertation Advising  
for prospective advisees  
by  
Helen M. Hazi

If you are interested in having me as a member of your committee or advisor, the following is meant to give you advice, demystify the "bid D," and to let you know about my philosophy on dissertation advising. The dissertation is a serious scholarly endeavor; it is not just another "hoop" to jump through. I've taken the time to write about this in hopes that it will generate, rather than close off, further conversation between us.

As a candidate at the dissertation phase, you are expected to become an expert in a body of theory and its research, and to propose a piece of original research that will make a contribution to the discipline. You must be familiar with and understand a topic to be able to write about it with ease and in a critical manner and to be able to field questions about it in meetings. Sounds simple? Well it's not.

A dissertation is an experience quite different from coursework. Through coursework you have become a generalist on a gamut of topics. Your comprehensives will assess your broad-based knowledge. But, in the next phase, as a doctoral candidate, you are expected to become a specialist, perhaps even more of an expert than your advisor or member of your committee.

A dissertation also requires you to be self-directed. You should "know thyself" and be familiar with your own learning, work, and writing styles. A dissertation requires you to conceptualize, theorize, and synthesize ideas and research. If you have been a typical student, you may have learned to come to rely on direction and feedback. You still get direction and feedback but it will be different. You set your own schedule, seek out and acquire information, and approach an advisor and/or members of the committee as needed. But the dissertation can be a process wrought with ambiguity. There will be many times when you leave your advisor that you won't know what hit you, or you'll feel that you did what your advisor asked and it's still not "right." That's just part of the process of seemingly endless drafts. Your own advisor will have a specific philosophy of how you will work together. Some advisors give more or less time to candidates, depending on the topic, the

candidate, and the advisor's schedule.

How do you become an expert on a topic? There are many signals. You begin recognizing noted scholars whose names continue to reappear, as cited by others in text and references. You develop a perspective on your topic's history, especially if different labels have been used to describe it over the years. You focus on its concepts, synonyms, and definitions to learn the language that is used by this community of scholars, so that you can be apart of that community through your writing. You learn the descriptors that best capture articles on your topic in computerized databases and Dissertation Abstracts International. You become able to differentiate articles that are oriented to scholars, to practitioners, and to researchers. You look for pieces that synthesize research in articles or handbooks and the most current pieces that are not yet published. You begin to recognize whether the design of research has been primarily empirical or interpretive in nature, and what method is typically used. You come to recognize at a more knowing level of understanding, its characteristics, trends, and gaps, so that you are then able to say with some assurance, "Here is where my research makes a contribution and this is why!" Similarly, you must be able to write with precision and clarity about the topic, using the language that is used by your community.

When do you become an expert? You need not have the expertise, but develop it by the end of your research. However, the earlier you select a topic in your program, the less overwhelming it will seem when you're ready to write your prospectus. You may be able to do readings and papers along the way in coursework that will allow you this familiarization.

How long does a dissertation take? This is a frequently asked question that cannot be answered, since each candidate has different circumstances. Those circumstances include: family demands, no or released time from job, pace of dissertation work, and topic and research design. It could take anywhere from one to two years. If you are considering taking time off, your advisor can help you consider the high peak times of data analysis and writing. The most difficult time to estimate is the formulation of the appropriate research questions.

When do I come up with my topic? One recent graduate reminded me: "Some candidates may have to eat their peas before they eat their

potatoes, and then their meat; while others can eat from all the food on their plate." Some think that when they finish all coursework and pass their comprehensives, then its time to get serious about the topic. I, on the other hand, counsel students when they apply to the program to begin thinking. This can provide a focus and sense of relevance to coursework that might otherwise seem abstract and removed from "the read world."

Am I a potential "ABD?" An ABD is "all but a dissertation." I have known a few. These individuals look like the rest of us, but when it comes to digging in their heels and getting serious about the dissertation something "snaps." They get overwhelmed. They easily find excuses to avoid the "big D": a change in jobs, the 1-2 hour commute to campus that seemed easy for coursework but becomes insurmountable for time in the library, the extra work assignments become burdensome, or a recent addition to the family becomes preoccupying--all of these and others can become signals of avoidance.

To this end, when you come close to the "big D," you should consider simplifying your life, so that you can make the dissertation your priority. Trust me, it will become all-consuming. You should not consider a new job or a divorce. Eliminate extracurricular activities and minimize life changes that could become stressors or distracters.

How will a dissertation "consume" me? You must be "immersed" enough in it to develop familiarity and confidence. You should be able to devote prolonged periods of time to it. During different phases, a "weekend dissertation" will not cut it. Material that you read and write about can become "cold." If you put something aside for a week, it takes time for you to become familiar with it again, so that you can get back up to a level where you can then write about it as you just did. Granted, there will be times that you will have to set something aside because you need the distance to gain a new perspective. But the dissertation will have its own "ebb and flow" that you will need to recognize. Setting up a schedule is perhaps too simplistic a way of thinking about this ebb and flow. Some days will be productive, while other days will not. The mind is a mysterious and unpredictable thing. You are not just producing this book, you are engaged in a creative endeavor.

What shape will this dissertation take? Doing a dissertation is not like doing a paper. You are involved in inquiry and the result of this inquiry is a creative and scholarly report of that inquiry. Pick

one up early in your program and read it from cover to cover; but do not get fixed on that as the model for your own, since it will be shaped by you and your advisor. Sit in on a prospectus or final defense that are open to the public so that you can demystify the process.

### The Advisor

An advisor is usually one with expertise in dissertation design. We acquire such expertise from our own dissertation, continuing to do our own research and readings on research, by directing dissertations, and through trial-and-error. We need not be an expert in that same body of knowledge, but it helps. If we are not, we hope either the candidate becomes that expert, and/or another member of that committee has the needed expertise. If we are not expert in empirical or qualitative design, we expect someone else on the committee to have it.

Know your advisor well and the amount of time (s)he is willing to devote to you. Hopefully throughout the program you will have been establishing a working, trusting relationship. But even the best of relationships can become strained during the dissertation. Key things to consider are: access, communication style, problem resolution style, expertise, and philosophy in working with students.

As you come closer to your prospectus, if you find that another member of your committee has more of the necessary expertise, consider switching chairs and consult your assigned chair.

### The Committee

Although committees are formed at the onset of the student's program, by the time you are ready for your prospectus, you should know the kinds of expertise that each member of your committee has, what is missing, and what has to be added formally or informally. It is not unusual to add or replace members at this time.

As you take your first 9-12 hours of coursework, you should be evaluating whether you want a professor on your committee. You should be assessing their strengths in theory, research design, and communication style. If you are unable to sample all the professors within a department, I encourage candidates to schedule an appointment

for an interview to acquire that information. Find out their interests, content and research expertise, and ideas for potential research topics. Although much information is available in a student "underground," your interests will be best served if you get the necessary information directly from "the horse's mouth," so to speak.

The committee is often viewed as a body who approves or disapproves of the research. If the candidate continues to view the committee in this light, it has the potential for being debilitating. Rather, the candidate should consider the committee as a resource for (s)he to manage throughout the different phases of the dissertation. Members should be receptive to providing feedback on drafts of different chapters.

### The Stress

A dissertation can be a stressful time. I have found that women analogize it to having a baby (only longer). This is and will be one of the most difficult things you'll have to do in your lifetime. Your family and friends may be able to sympathize with you, but will not fully understand or appreciate it unless they themselves have attempted such an ordeal. Often a simple question, "Aren't you done yet?" can strike terror in the most stalwart. Find ways to involve family in proofing, copying or checking references.

Sometimes stress gets manifested physically in individuals (e.g. warts, back problems, shingles, lockjaw) and emotionally (e.g. divorce, neglect). It's not unusual for people to report that they've moved out of the house, alienated their family, or dreamt about the dissertation in some period of writing. If you have the potential to become stressed, recognize its signs and find ways of coping with it, e.g. other students going through the same demands, a stress-sensitive advisor.

### The Researchable Question

The most difficult aspect of the dissertation is zeroing down on the questions. (Since I use the term "question" this should clue you into my interest and expertise in directing interpretive or qualitative studies.) Some advisors hand students topics, some wait for the topic to emerge from the soul of the student, and some vary their approach depending on the needs of the candidate. I first spend a lot of time listening to the candidate to help her/him ferret out a

"burning" question; and I've learned to vary my approach. Your topic can become real and "alive" if it comes from your own practice or experience.

Because of the complexity of research in education, the candidate often needs time to "spin their wheels," be lost in the literature, for a while. During this foray, the candidate's job is to go from "somewhere in the United States" to "Allen Hall, Morgantown, WV." This geographical analogy seems useful to students in the "zeroing down" process. The candidate acquires the aforementioned expertise along the way. Sometimes you travel down tangential paths and sometimes down dead ends. The key consideration during this step into ambiguity is to select the topic that is of interest and that you will want to live with for an unknown amount of time.

Topic interest is not something to be minimized. It must be able to sustain you "through your darkest hours." Hopefully, it will be the beginning of a professional and/or research career and not the end product of doctoral study. If you find interest in it, then its excitement will carry you through a journey where you ultimately discover, like the rest of us, that there are a lot more questions than answers. The bottom line here is that it is your study.

### Drafting of Documents

Throughout this step, as through all steps, you will produce drafts of documents. Many drafts are necessary and are but a representation of your thinking process. Writing and thinking are intricately related. Since you are working with your advisor, the drafts get shaped by feedback. Precision and clarity of thought is the goal. The more the drafts, the more precise and clear is the thinking. Quality is not indicated by quantity.

Each advisor has a preference for when a draft gets out to other members of the committee. When you get input from many, your job is to spot discrepancies of advice, and to alert your chair. Your chair's job is to know when a document is ready for other feedback and to resolve any discrepancy that may result.

Your chair will indicate how to get started and what citation style to follow. I prefer the APA style and encourage a 5-10 page mini document that becomes the working draft that then becomes expanded into successive drafts. We will have a series of conversations that



become the basis of this document. This mini document can include the following:

- Title
- Basic Difficulty/Topic/Introduction
- Why You're Interested in the Topic
- Statement of Purpose/Problem
- Rationale and Theoretical Base
- Importance of Study
- Research Objectives/Questions
- Research Design/Procedure
- Definitions of Terms
- References

The language used in the titles of each of the above sections will vary, depending on whether the research is empirical or interpretive. Also, your topic will shape the titles of the sections.

This mini document then becomes shaped through feedback and revision. You may be asked to locate: the etymology of a word; syntheses of research; historical information; national and state perspectives; and talk to individuals from the state department, professional associations, or national scholars themselves (who are remarkably receptive to phone calls). Along the way I will ask for reports of findings (especially if the information does not yet result in something written) and evaluate your grasp of the material as it is received. Along the way I will also look for ways to help you manage and simplify the information you are collecting.

Since you will continue to collect and integrate new information in an ever-enlarging spiral, I have to be sensitive to when its time to stop and process information through outlining or writing and when its time to collect more. This can seem like a shaky time because the candidate can easily get lost in any new information, before becoming grounded in what they do know and can manage. Sometimes the chair can see where the dissertation is going before the candidate can. Thus, unspoken trust has to operate here.

### Research Design

Sometimes candidates prematurely "lock on" to a research design. Method is different from research design. Since method is often the most concrete aspect of this ambiguous process, it is easy for the

candidate to think that they know what they are going to do. This brings premature closure. If this occurs, sometimes the advisor has to "break open" the candidate's way of thinking, until able to refocus, and be more settled and grounded than before.

Sometimes students know that they do not want to do a study involving statistics, and prematurely decide on a qualitative study. This involves a danger. Qualitative research is just as demanding and rigorous as empirical research. If you have done readings in qualitative research or taken a class you may be more informed about the consequences of such a decision. A qualitative study is time consuming in terms of its rationale, data interpretation, result, and finally its write up. If your committee members have had experience with qualitative research, they may be more receptive to your design.

### Your Best Friend

In addition to your chair, Char Allen in Student Advising (293-3126) is the person with which you will have the most contact. She knows all the procedures, paperwork, and deadlines, perhaps better than a chair. She is friendly and responsive to students.

### The Meetings

After your program meeting (which is the first), you will only have two formal meetings with your committee (prospectus and final defense), but may spend time with each individually. This will vary depending on the chair and study. You will follow certain procedures to schedule meetings and to get your prospectus and final document out to your members. The more contact you've had with your committee, the less of a surprise their responses will be. You will also discuss with your chair how the meeting will be structured and run.

Sometimes the chair will push a candidate to produce a document for a particular date, only to cancel the meeting. This may occur only if I feel the document or candidate is not ready. Deadlines (for drafts, documents, meetings, and graduation) are also part of the natural part of the ebb and flow of the process. I see a deadline as a positive motivator. If I or you see it as a stressor, then it will change. When the family asks when you're going to be through, only answer in approximates.

Each committee member will have his/her own style in a meeting.

From taking course(s) with those members (and having meetings) you will learn to anticipate the kinds of questions they will ask. Questions are to be anticipated and not feared. We ask questions to clarify, to look at taken for granted assumptions, to stretch, or to involve you in critique of your own work. After all, you are being admitted into a professional community, and in that community we ask such questions of each other. We do no less for you.

\* \* \* \*

As a former English teacher and someone who continues to write and publish in the field of supervision, I tend to think of myself as rigorous with high expectations, yet extremely supportive--one who aims for precise thinking with an economy of words. It is no less than I expect of my own writing and research. If you take me for a course or check out my writings, you will learn that first hand. Above all, however, I am concerned about helping you do original research of which you will be proud. The dissertation is another vehicle for your learning, where ideas are conceived and delivered into the world, and where we discover our own strengths and limitations. Although there is the potential for pain in such a process, I can only promise to minimize it, and hopefully, attempt to make it exciting. The dissertation (and not me) is what's demanding!

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When a student's document goes to the committee, it is (and you are) ready. We know its gaps and we fill them in the 2-3 weeks that the committee has the document to read. In that time the student prepares the presentation and/or the IRB document. Any corrections are either sent to the committee or given to them at the meeting. You are able to anticipate and address their questions.

You are so thorough, that little is touched in the research design or document of one of my students. If problems, you even have contingency plans prepared, if need be. You will see this first hand, when you are invited to attend a prospectus or final defense.

## Comprehensive Advice

from  
Helen M. Hazi, Ph.D.  
Education Leadership

To help you with the comprehensive, I will prepare a packet which includes: a) Advice on preparing for the comps, b) a sample comp question(s), and c) a list of readings (only if you have not had courses from me). If you are an EdLS major, you will write on one of two questions from each of your major professors. If you are doing an EdLS minor, you will write on one of two questions.

This advice is intended to reduce the anxiety often associated with this process and make the experience an educative one. Each professor has her or his own beliefs about the intent and best way to prepare for this experience, so please consult other members of your committee for help and suggestions.

### Intent

I believe that the intent of the comprehensive is to provide you, the student, with the opportunity to present your best thinking on an issue or topic. Since you will express your thinking on paper, your written response is only a representation of your knowledge. You cannot possibly tell me every thing you know on the topic (nor should you). The way you address the question(s) helps me to see how you conceptualize and reason.

### Types of Questions

The question(s) may ask you to respond to a quote or passage, take a position and argue it, respond to a situation in practice, fashion a plan, or explicate a concept. You may be asked to react to new (never before seen) information, or take information and apply it to an unfamiliar setting. (Don't panic!) It is important that you read the question, carefully determining what you are being asked to do, picking up on all its implicit and explicit parts.

### Readings (TBD for the student)

I will attempt to compile current and/or important pieces that reflect different dimensions of the field of supervision or related topic. You may make copies of any articles, but please keep them in tact for the next person. If an article is absent, please let me know. I also ask that you contribute to my thinking, by adding an article. Please supply a copy when you return the packet.

As you read through the articles, keep in mind that this is a different type of reading. You are to read for concepts and main points; less for detail. You will only have to refer to an author's last name and work as a general reference to address the question. You could keep a response journal or fashion some representation of your readings such as a matrix. Plan on discussing the readings with me.

Since I will try to write your question, before I give you this packet, please ask me to identify the areas that your questions will address (i.e., staff development, teacher evaluation, observation, curriculum, legal issues of practice).

### Practice

In order to practice this type of writing (which is primarily essay writing), I recommend that you simulate it in a room free of distraction for an uninterrupted time (two hours if an EdLS minor; 6 hours, if an EdLS major). Depending on the comp you may or may not have access to references.

When reading the question, determine what you are asked to do. It is important that you follow directions, using the language and structure inherent within each question. If the question is general, you must create your own structure. Pay special attention to the concepts that are present and make sure each is addressed. Take the first 15 minutes to compose your response, spend the next block of time writing, then save a final 15 minutes to edit. A word processor is strongly encouraged.

If you would like feedback on your practice comp, I will be happy to provide it. I can probably manage it within two weeks.

### Criteria for Evaluation

There is no single, right response to most questions. Instead, I'm interested in how you think, synthesize, conceptualize, evaluate, argue, or plan. And yes, I also may want you to disagree. To evaluate your ability to do these things, I look at your reasoning and evidence.

The reasoning should involve a logic that is traceable and consistent with the evidence you present. The evidence should draw from theory as well as practice. Since the way you write also reflects your reasoning, then clarity of expression is important, e.g., a carefully constructed introduction which expresses what you will do with an advanced organizer, organization which then follows as you have specified, and the use of examples when appropriate. (This is why editing time is necessary, since concluding statements are often your best introductions.)

Three questions are used to evaluate your response:

1. Does the candidate address all parts of the question in all of its complexity? This question is addressed by comparing the parts of the question to the parts of your response.
2. Does the written response reflect a novice's understanding of writers in the field? This question is addressed by noting to which writers in supervision or leadership you refer.
3. Does the written response reflect a rigor of thought? To address this question, I evaluate its content. I define rigor as the logic, precision, and quality of thinking reflected in the content of the response. I find that the response lacks rigor.

GOOD LUCK!!!

## Coming to the Dissertation Topic

The dissertation is your vehicle for learning in this phase of doctoral study. It is a process of inquiry, as well as a product. (Research is the way that I, as a professor, continue to learn about my field.) It is an evolving, inductive process until the prospectus (the research proposal) is developed. By this phase, you should know the difference between a work that is research vs. an opinion, be versed in a citation style (e.g. the latest edition of APA) and can access information through an information data-base (e.g., ERIC) with the correct descriptors neither getting too little or too many.

If you can answer the following questions, then you are ready to begin working on your dissertation. If not, then these questions can help you to get ready for the process.

- What is the topic(s) that you are most interested in studying?
- Who are the noted scholars on the topic(s)?
- What are the seminal works (i.e., authoritative article/chapter that synthesizes the literature so you can explain where your research fits, if it has been written)?
- What educational leadership theories will inform your study?
- If you cannot locate your topic within the educational administration literature, then how do you "build the bridges" to locate it in the field or between fields?
- What dissertations have been done (from Dissertation Abstracts International) and what is most needed?
- What contributions will this study make to leadership theory and practice?
- How is this an educational leadership study?
- If you have more than one topic, how will you select one?

The dissertation is a process of collecting and processing information from a variety of sources over time, including personal communication from officials.

- What are the appropriate ERIC search descriptors that capture articles on your topic?
- Which data-bases will your search include and over which time periods?
- What can you tell from the presence, as well as absence, of articles/research on a topic?
- How can you use the related literature to show how your research fits into the field(s)?
- What scholars, state or national officials should you call to confirm your perspectives?
- Should I interview individual(s) from a state department or professional association to include non-documented information in my document?

The dissertation is a process of generating drafts of documents that reflect varying stages of your thinking on the topic. Some call it a "deliberative process." In the early stages different forms of representation can convey your thinking. Some students portray their thinking with "maps," with outlines, and with text.

How do you get started? I advise people to write the Review of Literature (which is most likely --but not always -- Chapter 2). Once grounded in the literature you will become "the expert on the topic" knowing it far better than your advisor or committee. Then you will produce multiple "drafts" of the first three chapters of your dissertation that will evolve, becoming more detailed over time.

The dissertation also involves coming to know yourself as a learner, writer, and sometimes procrastinator. It can be a lonely process:

- What are your writing habits?
- Where is your best writing space and with what "treats"? (Some prefer a cappuccino machine, Disco Diva radio, a water fountain, always sharp pencils, etc.)

- How do you avoid writing?
- Do you need a support group to be accountable?
- How do you prioritize this in relation to work and family?
- What role does guilt play?
- When do you best write with a willing spirit?
- Is feedback hard to take; why?
- How can you have a critical eye toward your own writing?
- How can you inform and involve family when they don't have a clue about the time, process and commitment I must make?
- Why aren't I making more progress?
- Am I really the writer I thought I was?

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## Getting it Down on Paper

Some believe that the dissertation is a deliberative, iterative process of producing and reacting to drafts of documents. If this is your first attempt to put your ideas to paper, you may want to consider the following methods to reduce your thoughts to paper. Choose the method that helps you to “get the big picture.”

### The Outline.....

0. Possible Title
1. Statement of the purpose
2. Rationale
3. Theoretical framework of the proposed study
4. Educational importance of the proposed study to Educational Leadership Studies
5. Major hypotheses to be tested or Research questions to be addressed
6. Methods for carrying out the proposed study
7. Major Concepts to be defined

### The Concept Map.....

A concept map is a visual representation of the concepts that your study may or will address. A concept map allows you to process abstract concepts and to see the big picture. It does something different that an outline cannot do. It helps you to better explicate your understanding of concepts, their hierarchies and interrelationships. A concept map is also useful when trying to synthesize large amounts of studies, when you do not yet know how concepts fit together, and when you are unable yet to string the concepts together in a linear way.

A concept map is

a two-dimensional schematic device for representing a set of meanings embedded in a framework of propositions. Composed of concepts and linking words or symbols arranged in hierarchical order, a concept map is a representation of an individual's or a group's interpretation of ideas or perceived reality in diagrammatic form. Concept mapping has many synonyms. It is also

called concept trees, web teaching, knowledge mapping, cognitive mapping, and semantic networking. Whatever the terminology used, all concept maps as visuo-spatial arrangements of information and they are one of the tools of meta-learning (p. 35).

Check out the following web sites for examples or do a search on Google.com if these are no longer available:

[http://users.edte.utwente.nl/lanzing/cm\\_home.htm](http://users.edte.utwente.nl/lanzing/cm_home.htm)

[http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newISS\\_01.htm](http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newISS_01.htm)

Based on J. Beitz' "Concept Mapping: Navigating the Learning Process," Nurse Educator 23(3) 35-41.

### The Section...

I write to learn. Depending upon what I have been reading, I can best write a section of something that I have just learned. I may not know what yet comes before and after, but I do know that this is a section that must be included some place. I do not let this uncertainty prevent me from writing. I believe that if I don't use it, I will lose it. The writing helps me process what I have just read. If I wait and assume that I must read EVERYTHING, then I could most likely forget what I have read, or worse, get lost in the literature and overwhelmed. SO unapologetically I will write the section. Invariably I will discover where it belongs and why.

I also don't let missing concepts get in the way. If I think something is the bridge but have not yet discovered it, it might use a bracket and write:

[concept TBD]

[history TB written]

[definition to be found]

[more recent stats needed]

Down is better than perfect; but I also don't let this go out yet for feedback until I have fewer if these.

## On Writing

When I write I have the following by my side: a grammar book, Kessler & McDonald's *When Words Collide: A Journalist's Guide to Grammar and Style*; my latest edition of *the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*; Roget's *Thesaurus*; and a dictionary.

These are suggestions for writing a dissertation that is clear, straightforward and to the point:

- Write in the active voice in short sentences, grouped into short paragraphs.
- Use headings as signposts for the reader.
- Use topic sentences as introductions to paragraphs and advanced organizers as introductions to sections.
- Use concepts consistently instead of synonyms.
- Define terms and concepts in text.
- Use lists, checklists, figures, and other devices to present information succinctly.
- Keep chapters relatively short and concise.
- Summarize points at the end of a chapter.
- Know and follow your style manual.
- Proof your documents by hand to catch items that a spell or grammar check may not catch.
- Keep dated copies of previous drafts. Back up copies and put one on a CD/thumb in a safety deposit box.
- If you are not a detail person, then find some one who can proof for your citation style, consistency and level of headings, and typos.
- I will often start you writing on Chapter II first, then III, then I. You can't write an introduction until you know your design. The literature Chapter 2 will often dictate the design once you see what has been done and what research is needed.
- See Requirements for dissertations and electronic submission  
<http://www.libraries.wvu.edu/theses/index.htm>  
pay attention to deadlines. The committee needs the prospectus 2 weeks in advance and the final document 3 weeks in advance.

## Joining a Dissertation Support Group

Since the dissertation can be a unique, but lonely experience, I initiated a student group to provide emotional support, share practical advice (re: from where to get your thesis bound to how to run computer programs), and intellectual guidance. The purposes of such a group are:

- 1) to provide support for those ready or close to doing a dissertation,
- 2) to help manage and coordinate my advising time and resources, and
- 3) to share ideas, information, and research help in starting (and continuing )a dissertation.

Such group support supplements, but does not supplant, individual conferences with the committee chair. If I am a member of your committee, but not chair, you need to keep our chair informed about your involvement and progress.

While a group sets its own meeting time and agenda, most meet at least monthly and sometimes around food. Group members typically:

- give progress reports,
- react to each other's ideas and drafts of documents, and
- share books, IRB documents, frustration, and progress.

The first group met from 1992 through the summer of 1995 and the last of its five successfully defended her dissertation in December 1995. The second group met from 1997 through 2000. A current group of 4 meets on its own. Such a group helps to demystify the research process and provides a unique service to students.

If interested in joining or starting a group, please contact me.

## Proposal for Independent Study

As a doctoral student, if you would like to work with me on a special topic, you will need to propose a plan of how we will work together. This proposal will help you stay focussed when working on your own and it also represents our contract.

Your proposal should contain the following information:

- I. Title
- II. Rationale: (Why are you doing this project?)
- III. Goals: (What do you hope to accomplish and learn as a result of doing this project or independent study? or What questions will guide your inquiry?)
- IV. Product(s): (What do you want to produce to show evidence of your learning? A document? A concept map? An outline of a workshop or some process?)
- V. Work Plan: (How will you accomplish your goal(s)? What assistance do you want from the instructor? What are timelines for readings, products, and meetings? How will the product be organized? When will it be submitted?)
- VI. Criteria for evaluation: (How will you be evaluated?)

Student \_\_\_\_\_

Instructor \_\_\_\_\_

Date

You will submit this as a "draft" for discussion. Once we meet, we will finalize this work plan.

Hazi's Interpretation of the 3 Chapter Prospectus\*

Title Page  
Table of Contents

Chapter 1 Introduction	Chapter 2 Review of Literature	Chapter 3 Research Design
Introduction	Introduction	Introduction
Research Justification	<i>Customized And longest</i>	Research Theoretic
Statement of Purpose		Positivism vs. Interpretivism
Research Questions		Review of Research Method(s)
Research Design		Research Procedures
Definition of Terms		Summary
Organization of Document		Including dissertations
	Summary	

References

Appendices (MAY include)
Letter(s) of Support IRB Letter to Participants Survey/Interview Questions/Document Analysis Pilot Study

The Final Document adds:

Chapter 4 Data Interpretation	Chapter 5 Conclusions
Introduction	Summary
<i>Customized (and may be reported by research questions)</i>	Conclusions (by research questions)
	Discussion
	List of Recommendations (for Policy, Practice, Preservice Preparation, Inservice, Further Research)
Summary	

- Contents and headings will vary if Quantitative/Positivist or Qualitative/Interpretive design
- The more Chapters 1,2, 3 are developed (and polished) for the prospectus, the less work for the final document. Tense changes and literature is updated in final document.

## Hazi's Take on Dissertation Pitfalls\*

Title: Not reflective of true intent

Purpose: Trivial

- Process:
- the dissertation as disciplined inquiry
    - thinking this has to be clear in your head before you write
    - amassing material without “accounting” and digesting it
    - formatting, Word commands, APA
    - thinking this is another paper
    - major life changes (job, move, family, health)
    - comparing yourself to others
    - not a detail person

Chapter 1 Introduction	Chapter 2 Review of Literature	Chapter 3 Research Design
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assumptions about audience and how it will read your document</li> <li>• Definition of Terms missing or too many</li> <li>• Multiple statements of purpose, unclear research questions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not in past tense</li> <li>• Focuses on the “trees” and ignores “forest” “LOST”</li> <li>• Wanders and unfocused                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research written as a serial</li> <li>• Lacks national/state perspective</li> <li>• Omits dissertation research</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review of research methods missing</li> <li>• Forgets that others are supposed to be able to do and understand how to do the study</li> <li>• Lacks credibility</li> </ul>

References

Appendices (MAY include)
Forgets to use this to house examples, some analysis, and other helpful info to replicate study

### The Final Document

Chapter 4 Data Interpretation	Chapter 5 Conclusions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disorganized</li> <li>• If qualitative, long unfocused text that is hard to read and searching for conclusions</li> <li>• If quantitative, tedious</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Candidate is tired and careless</li> <li>• Conclusions over- reaching beyond purpose of study</li> <li>• Discussion non-existent</li> </ul>

- Contents and headings will vary is Quantitative/Positivist or Qualitative/Interpretive design
- The more Chapters 1,2, 3 are developed (and polished) for the prospectus, the less work for the final document.

## In General

- Get into a cycle of writing and producing documents, editing a hard copy of your own work with a critical eye, seeking feedback on gaps and missing concepts, and revising based on feedback. You should be able to put a document down and then pick it up with the eyes of a stranger reading it for the first time.
- Your job is *not* to please me but to seek feedback and use me as a resource for: identifying conceptual gaps, locating relevant literature, and whether the document is communicating your messages in a clear, well-developed and organized manner. I am not a copy editor.
- Use APA 6<sup>th</sup>, a dictionary, thesaurus, and a grammar book. I do.
- Upon receipt I need 4 days to review a document at minimum. The longer the document, the more days needed. I will be juggling my work with that of others. When I receive it I will try to say you are “3<sup>rd</sup>” which means I’m backlogged with 2 others to read before yours.
- Documents will be returned unread at the first signs of Word, typo, grammar or APA errors. This is an indication of carelessness and means that you have not proofed, or developed a critical eye for your work. This disrespects my valuable time and dishonors your abilities.
- Learn to ebb and flow. When my ideas are flowing I enjoy writing, willing sit and write, may dream about it or wake up writing a sentence in my head and can go right to the computer to work. When I can get excited about what I am learning or thinking about, then the task of writing is effortless and hard to stop.

Conversely when I’m unhappy, stressed about other matters such as work, exhausted, or not into writing, I cannot sit down and expect the day to be productive. You need to recognize your own ebb and flow and make wise decisions about productivity that is with a happy, guilt/resentment free heart.

## Writing issues

Your writing can interfere with your message. I stop reading when the language and construction interfere with the “flow.” My job is to identify the conceptual gaps and the next steps.

Tense: Chapter 2 generally is in the past; while 1 and 3 may have some elements of future tense, until the final document and they are converted to past.

The 1960s have no apostrophe.

Avoid rhetorical questions, unless you intend to answer them, and editorializing, e.g., “indeed,” “obviously.”

References used only appear in list of references. Headings and their levels follow APA. Introduce quotes as per APA.



Definition of Terms: is not for every major term in your study, but the major ones found in title, research questions, survey questions. The definition should similarly appear in your text.

Appropriately use: the colon, semi-colon, hyphen, periods (inside of quotation marks), the article “the,” adverbs vs. connectors, commas with compound adjectives, and “that.” The i.e., and e.g., require commas after use.

Once your prospectus has been approved, you will have to update references prior to final defense, making sure you have the most recent research. Avoid secondary source citation. Instead, get the original source.

Advanced organizers: Each chapter needs an introduction to explain its sections, in the order in which they appear. Each paragraph should begin with a topic sentence.

Fewer words (not details) are better than more.

### Conceptual issues

*Consistency* is your objective. Synonyms and abbreviations only obscure your message. Use the concept consistently. Use “panel” (what the literature uses) and not committee in subsequent sentences.

*Opinion vs. research:* Scholars may hold the opinion about some topic, but do not assume it is research, unless the findings have been reported as a research study. Do not assume writings are research-based, when, in fact, they are merely opinions.

*Your opinion:* Your opinion influences what information you share and the argument you create. You can judiciously give your opinion in appropriate place. After all, the prospectus is an “argument” for what you want to study, and you will defend it in meetings.

*Define* important concepts when used for the first time.

*Research Justification:* Every step of your research design should be justified with definitions of terms and reference to others who have done something similar (but not exactly like yours). If you have a survey, define what it is and why it is the preferred method, along with what is a mean and frequency distribution, and why this is the best method to tabulate the results. If you use chi-square you must be able to write and talk what it means.

*The research questions will dictate your design. If quantitative* seek a WVU expert (from your committee or another) on statistics and design. Ask for a good stat or survey design book as a reference. *If qualitative*, I most likely will be your research design expert.

*Assume your reader knows nothing.*