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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Ten Strategic Points**  The ten strategic points emerge from researching literature on a topic, which is based on, or aligned with a defined need or problem space within the literature as well as the learner’s personal passion, future career purpose, and degree area. The Ten Strategic Points document includes the following key points that define the research focus and approach: | | |
| **Strategic Points Descriptor** | | **Learner Strategic Points for Proposed Study** |
| **1.** | **Dissertation Topic**- Provides a broad research topic area/title. | * Topic comes out of the problem space supported by the literature, not the learner’s head or personal agenda * Aligned to the learners’ program of study, and ideally the emphasis area * Researchable and feasible to complete within the learners’ doctoral program, including extension courses as needed. * Focused |
| **2.** | **Literature Review** - Lists primary points for four sections in the Literature Review: (a) Background of the problem and the need for the study based on citations from the literature; (b) Theoretical foundations (theories, models, and concepts) and if appropriate the conceptual framework to provide the foundation for study); (c) Review of literature topics with key themes for each one; (d) Summary. | * Background to the problem   + Literature is predominantly from past 5 years   + Historical treatment of problem being studied   + Clearly defines a stated need * Theoretical foundation   + Theories, models, or concepts and if appropriate the conceptual framework are described to guide the research and the data collection * Review of literature topics   + Relevant to the topic   + Demonstrates breadth of knowledge |
| **3.** | **Problem Statement** - Describes the problem to address through the study based on defined needs or problem space supported by the literature | * Statement is structured appropriate for the design * Researchable * Describe the problem to be better understood |
| **4.** | **Sample and Location** – Identifies sample, needed sample size, and location (study phenomenon with small numbers). | * Size is appropriate for design * Likely to be able to access it/get permission * Identify alternative to their organization (associations, community orgs, research companies, snowball sampling, etc.) |
| **5.** | **Research Questions** – Provides research questions to collect data to address the problem statement. | * Appropriate for the design * Resulting data will address the problem statement * Minimum of 2 |
| **6.** | **Phenomenon** - Describes the phenomenon to be better understood (qualitative). | * Qualitative: Describe the phenomenon to be better understood |
| **7.** | **Methodology and Design** - Describes the selected methodology and specific research design to address the problem statement and research questions. | * Methodology and design sections   + Appropriate for problem statement   + Justifies the methodology or design using problem statement and citations   + Methodology does not discuss design, instrument, data collection   + Design does not discuss instrument, data collection, data analysis |
| **8.** | **Purpose Statement** – Provides one sentence statement of purpose including the problem statement, methodology, design, target population, and location. | * Purpose statement = Methodology + design + problem statement + sample + location |
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| **10.** | **Data Analysis** – Describes the specific data analysis approaches to be used to address research questions. | * Qualitative: Include descriptive statistics; analytic approach appropriate for specific design; summary specific to the design * Data analysis approach aligned to the design and RQs |

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Dean, College of Doctoral Studies

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*Keywords*: Abstract, one-page, vital information lopesup

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| **Criterion**  **\*(Score = 0, 1, 2, or 3)** | **Learner Score** | **Chair Score** | **Methodologist Score** | **Content Expert Score** |
| **ABSTRACT**  **(Dissertation Only—Not Required for the Proposal)**  (one page) | | | | |
| The abstract provides a succinct summary of the study and MUST include: the purpose of the study, theoretical foundation, research questions stated in narrative format, sample, location, methodology, design, data sources, data analysis, results, and a valid conclusion of the research. **Note: *The most important finding(s) should be stated with actual codes and resulting themes data/numbers (qualitative).*** |  |  |  |  |
| The abstract is written in APA format, one paragraph fully justified with no indentations, double-spaced with no citations, one page, and includes key search words. Keywords are on a new line and indented. |  |  |  |  |
| The abstract is written in a way that is well structured, has a logical flow, uses correct paragraph structure, uses correct sentence structure, punctuation, and APA format. |  |  |  |  |
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*Correct Formatting for a Multiple Line Table Title is Single Spaced and Should Look Like this Example*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Participant | Gender | Role | Location |
| Susan | F | Principal | School A |
| Mary | F | Teacher | School A |
| Joseph | M | Principal | School B |
| *Note.* Adapted from: I.M. Researcher (2010). Sampling and Recruitment in Studies of Doctoral Students. *Journal of Perspicuity*, 25, p. 100. Reprinted with permission. | | | |

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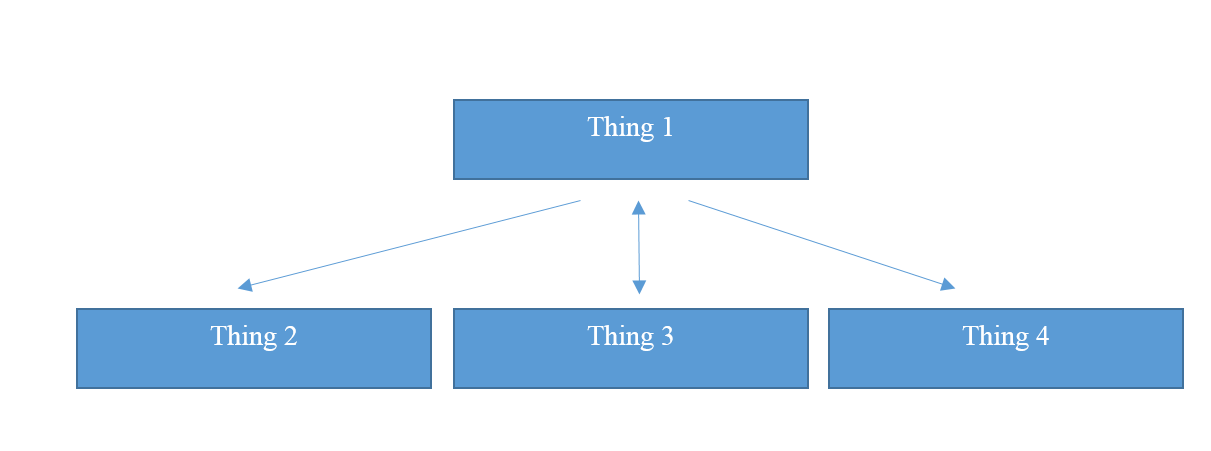
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**Figure 1**  
  
*The Relationship of Things*



# Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

## Introduction

**THIS CHAPTER SHOULD BE WRITTEN AFTER THE LEARNER HAS WRITTEN CHAPTERS 2 AND 3.** **The minimum progression milestone for draft of Chapter 1 “Acceptance” by chair and submission to methodologist and content expert is in dissertation course 966E. Refer to Appendix L Minimum Progression Milestone Table and the most recent Dissertation Milestone Guide for additional details. Dissertation course 966E is the absolute latest course for Chapter 1 acceptance by chair and submission to methodologist and content expert. Learners are highly encouraged to work ahead and submit Chapter 1 in earlier dissertation courses.**

In this section the researcher describes what they propose to investigate. The College of Doctoral Studies recognizes the diversity of learners in our programs and the varied interests in research topics for their dissertations in the Social Sciences. Dissertation topics must, at a minimum, be aligned to the learner’s program of study: PhD in General Psychology; Ed.D. in Organizational Leadership; Ed.D. in Teaching and Learning; DBA in Business Administration; PhD in Counselor Education and Supervision. Please note the PhD program in General Psychology does not support clinically based research. If there are questions regarding appropriate alignment of a dissertation topic to the degree program, the respective program chair will be the final authority for approval decisions. The College also strongly recommends a learner’s topic align with the program emphasis, however emphasis alignment is not “required.” The College will remain flexible on the learner’s dissertation topic if it aligns with the degree program in which the learner is enrolled.

The introduction section is used to develop the significance of the proposed study by describing how it is new or different from other studies and how it advances knowledge and practice or addresses something that is not already known or understood within a particular context or problem space. The learner also includes the purpose statement in this section, which was developed in Chapter 3. Please carefully review the following information for specific template requirements and guidelines for use.

**This GCU Dissertation Template provides the structure for the GCU dissertation. It includes important narrative, instructions, and requirements in each chapter and section. Learners must read the narrative in each section to fully understand what is required and review the section criteria table which provides exact details on what must be included in the section and how the section will be scored.** **As learners write each section, they should delete the narrative and “Help” comments but leave the criterion table after each section as this is how the committee members will evaluate the learners’ work.** Additionally, when inserting their own narrative into the template, learners should never remove the chapter and section headings, as these are already formatted, or “styled.” Removing the headings will cause the text to have to be reformatted; that is, you will need to reapply the style. “Styles” are a feature in Word that define what the text looks like on the page. For example, the style “Heading 1”, used for Chapter headings and the List of Tables title, the List of Figures title, the References title, and the Appendices title, has set up to conform to APA: bold, double spaced, “keep with next,” Times New Roman 12. In addition, the automatic TOC “reads” these styles so that the headings show up in the TOC and exactly match those in the text. Correct heading formatting is a requirement. Correct section formatting is a requirement. The template itself is correctly formatted for APA and publication in ProQuest; it should be maintained. Do not override the formatting on the preliminary pages, level 1 and 2 headings, or Appendices titles.

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To ensure the quality of the proposal and dissertation, the writing needs to reflect doctoral level, scholarly-writing standards ***from the very first draft****.* Each section within the proposal should be well organized and easy for the reader to follow. Each paragraph should be short, clear, and focused. A paragraph should (1) be three to eight sentences in length, (2) focus on one point, topic, or argument, (3) include a topic sentence the defines the focus for the paragraph, and (4) include a transition sentence to the next paragraph. Include one space after each period. There should be no grammatical, punctuation, sentence structure, or APA formatting errors. Verb tense is an important consideration for Chapters 1 through 3. For the proposal, the researcher uses present or future tense (e.g., “The purpose of the study ***is*** to…”). For the dissertation, the researcher uses past or present perfect tense (e.g., “The purpose of the study ***was*** to…”). Taking the time to ensure high-quality, scholarly writing for each draft will save learners time in all the steps of the development and review phases of the dissertation process.

As a doctoral level researcher, it is the learner’s responsibility to ensure the clarity, quality, and correctness of their writing and APA formatting. It is also up to the doctoral learner to ensure articles are represented, cited, and used appropriately. When a citation is misrepresented, this is a serious research ethics violation. The GCU Student Success Center provides various resources to help learners improve their writing. The chair and committee members are not obligated to edit documents. Additionally, the peer reviewers will not edit the proposal or dissertation. Poor writing quality will delay progression through the dissertation milestones. If learners do not have good writing skills, they may need to identify a writing coach, editor, and/or other resource to help with writing and editing. **Proposals and dissertations that are fundamentally unreadable and submitted with egregious grammatical, structural, and/or form-and-formatting errors may be returned without a full review.**

The quality of a proposal or dissertation is evaluated based on the quality of writing and on the criteria that GCU has established for each section of the document. The criteria describe what must be addressed in each section within each chapter. As learners develop a section, they should read each section description first. Then, learners should review each criterion contained in the table below the description. Learners will use both the narrative description and criteria as they write each section. They should address each listed criterion clearly to the chair and committee members. Learners need to write clearly enough that a reader can find where each criterion is met in each section.

The template is set up as a blueprint for a well-structured proposal and dissertation. It contains the elements of a solid research study. The advantage of the template is that it provides a framework, clear expectations, and criteria that meets expected standards for a doctoral dissertation. Doctoral learners should address all criteria in order to meet these expected standards. Keep in mind that these criteria are suggested, and any unaddressed criteria needs to be discussed with the committee. **When the template format or criteria are not followed, learners should include an explanation as to why this occurred.** For example, in Chapter 2 – Literature Review, the recommended length is approximately 30 pages. If a learner has completed a thorough review within 27 pages, and the committee agrees the literature review meets expectations, the learner may move forward with the 27-page literature review. Another example is the recommendation that 75% of citations are within the past five years. This is a general guideline to help ensure the learner’s research is current within the defined problem space. Learners need to work with committee members to ensure that appropriate foundational and current literature are represented. There may other criteria within the template that may not apply and as such, the learner can address with a brief explanation.

Prior to submitting a draft of the proposal, dissertation, or a single chapter to the chair or committee members, learners should assess the degree to which each criterion has been met. Use the criteria table at the end of each section to complete this self-assessment. The following scores reflect the readiness of the document:

* 0 = Item Not Present or Unacceptable. Substantial Revisions Are Required.
* 1 = Item is Present. Does Not Meet Expectations. Revisions are Required.
* 2 = Item is Acceptable. Meets Expectations.
* 3 = Item is Exemplary. No Revisions Required.

Sometimes the chair and committee members will score the work “between” numbers, such as a 1.5 or 2.5. The important thing to remember is that a minimum score of 2 is required on most criteria before one can move to the next step in the review process. The chair has the discretion to determine when a document is ready for committee member review or peer review.

Learners need to continuously and objectively self-evaluate the quality of writing and content for each section within the proposal or dissertation. Learners will score themselves using the learner column in the criterion tables as evidence that they have critically evaluated their own work. When learners have completed a realistic, comprehensive self-evaluation of their work, they then may submit the document to the chair for review. Using all 3’s will indicate that the learner has not realistically evaluated their work. The chair will also review and score each section of the proposal and dissertation and will determine when it is ready for full committee review. Keep in mind the committee review process will likely require several editorial/revisions rounds, so plan for multiple revision cycles as learners develop their dissertation completion plan and project timeline. Notice in the criterion tables that certain columns have an X in the scoring box. As mentioned above, the chair will score the entire document; the methodologist is only required to score Chapters 1, 3 and 4; and, the content expert is only required to score Chapters 1, 2, and 5. The chair and committee members will assess each criterion in their required chapters when they return the document with feedback.

Once the document has been fully scored and the chair and committee members deem the document adequately developed to move forward to Level 2 or Level 5 Peer Review, the chair will submit the proposal or dissertation for Peer Review. Refer to the Dissertation Milestones Guide for descriptions of levels of review and submission process. Keep in mind the proposal and dissertation review processes are highly iterative. Learners will make many, many revisions incorporating chair, committee members, peer reviewers, IRB reviewers, and dean’s comments into a finished fully approved manuscript. **Important Note:** **Learners are not finished with the dissertation until the dean signs the cover page, and the doctoral degree will not be conferred without a completed, committee approved, dissertation accepted and signed by the dean.** lop**esup**

| **Criterion**  **\*(Score = 0, 1, 2, or 3)** | **Learner Score** | **Chair Score** | **Methodologist Score** | **Content Expert Score** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Introduction**  (Typically three to four paragraphs or approximately one page) | | | | |
| The learner introduces the dissertation topic supported by prior research as defined by the problem space (see Chapter 2 for more information regarding problem space). |  |  |  |  |
| The learner states the purpose statement. |  |  |  |  |
| The learner provides an overview about how the study advances knowledge and practice. |  |  |  |  |
| The learner writes this section in a way that is well structured, has a logical flow, uses correct paragraph structure, sentence structure, punctuation, and APA format. |  |  |  |  |
| **\*Score each requirement listed in the criteria table using the following scale:**  0 = Item Not Present or Unacceptable. Substantial Revisions are Required.  1 = Item is Present. Does Not Meet Expectations. Revisions are Required.  2 = Item is Acceptable. Meets Expectations. Some Revisions May be Suggested or Required.  3 = Item Exceeds Expectations. No Revisions are Required. | | | | |
| **Reviewer Comments:** | | | | |

## Background of the Study

**Effects of Environment, especially Classroom Environment, on Early Childhood Education**

Aguiar, A. L., Aguiar, C., Cadima, J., Correia, N., & Fialho, M. (2019). Classroom quality and children’s social skills and problem behaviors: Dosage and disability status as moderators. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, *49*, 81-92.

This study looked at the effect of classroom quality on student outcomes. The authors examined the relationship between classroom quality, measured by the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS), and the social skills and problem behaviors of 528 Portuguese children aged 3-6. They found that higher classroom quality was associated with higher social skills and lower problem behaviors, with dosage and disability status moderating the effect. This suggests that the classroom environment plays an important role in student outcomes and that such an effect may be more pronounced for certain students.

Carr, R. C., Mokrova, I. L., Vernon-Feagans, L., & Burchinal, M. R. (2019). Cumulative classroom quality during pre-kindergarten and kindergarten and children’s language, literacy, and mathematics skills. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, *47*, 218-228.

Carr et al. (2019) studied the effects of cumulative classroom quality on student language, literacy, and math skills. They found that students performed better when classrooms had a positive learning environment. This includes having an environment that is engaging, supportive, and encourages learning. Additionally, teacher-student relationships should be positive and strong, as this helps to foster a sense of community and support student success.

Dörnyei, Z., & Muir, C. (2019). Creating a motivating classroom environment. *Second handbook of English language teaching*, 719-736.

Dörnyei & Muir (2019) discuss the importance of creating a motivating classroom environment to maximize student engagement and success. Teachers must understand the need to create an environment conducive to learning and encourages student participation. This includes developing good relationships with students, creating a sense of community in the classroom, and using positive reinforcement. Additionally, teachers should be aware of their attitudes and behavior, as they influence student motivation.

Garber, K. L., Foster, T. J., Little, M. H., Cohen-Vogel, L., Bratsch-Hines, M., & Burchinal, M. R. (2023). Transition Practices of Rural Pre-K and Kindergarten Teachers and Their Relations to Children’s Academic and Social Skills. *Early Education and Development*, *34*(2), 426-448.

Garber et al. (2023) looked at the transition practices of rural pre-kindergarten and kindergarten teachers and how they relate to student’s academic and social skills. They found that when teachers used positive transition practices, such as providing emotional support and being aware of each child’s individual needs, students had better academic and social outcomes. Additionally, it was found that when teachers had positive relationships with students, students were more likely to have better self-regulation and behavior.

Goldberg, M. J., Lloyd, D. D., Syed, G., Welch, G. W., & Curenton, S. M. (2022). A validation study of the assessing classroom sociocultural equity scale (ACSES) in pre-kindergarten to third-grade classrooms. *Early Education and Development*, 1-24.

This study aimed to validate the Assessing Classroom Sociocultural Equity Scale (ACSES) in pre-kindergarten to third-grade classrooms. The ACSES measures the classroom environment and is composed of different subscales. It found that the ACSES was a reliable and valid measure for assessing the classroom environment. Across all participating classrooms, the ACSES was sensitive to differences in the classroom environment and teacher practices, showing that it could be used to measure the socio-cultural equity of classrooms. It also found that classroom environment was significantly associated with teacher practices and academic achievement.

Penttinen, V., Pakarinen, E., von Suchodoletz, A., & Lerkkanen, M. K. (2020). Relations between kindergarten teachers’ occupational well-being and the quality of teacher-child interactions. *Early education and development*, *31*(7), 994-1010.

This study examined the effects of the kindergarten teacher’s occupational wellness on the quality of their interactions with the children. They found that teachers with higher levels of occupational wellness generally had higher-quality interactions with the children and vice versa. They concluded that the quality of teacher-child interactions is an important factor to consider when looking at the overall quality of the classroom environment.

Salminen, J., Laakso, M. L., Poikkeus, A. M., & Lerkkanen, M. K. (2022). Teacher-child interactions as a context for developing social competence in toddler classrooms. *Journal of Early Childhood Education Research*, *11*(1).

This examined the effects of early childhood education on the development of children from birth to the age of six. The research utilized a longitudinal study design, observing the effects of early childhood education on the development of children from birth to six years of age. The study found that high-quality early childhood education benefits children in terms of social, emotional, cognitive, and academic development. The study also found that the effects of early childhood education on different developmental domains are not consistent across all children but depend on various factors such as the quality of early childhood education, the child’s biological and social environment, and the family’s socioeconomic background. The authors concluded that high-quality early childhood education is a critical factor in children’s development and should be accessible regardless of their background.

Yeomans-Maldonado, G., Justice, L. M., & Logan, J. A. (2019). The mediating role of classroom quality on peer effects and language gain in pre-kindergarten ECSE classrooms. *Applied Developmental Science*, *23*(1), 90-103.

The importance of the environment in early childhood education is well-documented. Researchers have found that the quality of the classroom can significantly impact children’s learning and development. Yeomans-Maldonado et al. (2019) conducted a study to examine the role of classroom quality on peer effects and language gain in pre-kindergarten ECSE classrooms. They found that classroom quality was a significant factor in peer effects and language gains. Additionally, they found that better classroom quality led to better language gains.

Wolf, S., Aber, J. L., Behrman, J. R., & Tsinigo, E. (2019). Experimental impacts of the “Quality Preschool for Ghana” interventions on teacher professional well-being, classroom quality, and children’s school readiness. *Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness*, *12*(1), 10-37.

This study found that QPG interventions positively impacted teachers’ professional well-being, classroom quality, and children’s school readiness scores. Teachers who received QPG training reported higher levels of job satisfaction, increased confidence in their teaching ability, and improved classroom management. Classroom quality also improved with enhanced instruction levels and learning materials. In addition, children in the intervention classrooms showed higher scores on measures of school readiness than those in the control group. It provided evidence that investments in early childhood education can positively impact teacher well-being, classroom quality, and the academic performance of young children. The interventions used in this study are a good example of how targeted programs can improve the quality of early childhood education.

Zhou, W., & Wang, S. (2023). Early childhood health shocks, classroom environment, and social-emotional outcomes. *Journal of Health Economics*, *87*, 102698.

Zhou & Wang (2023) explore how early childhood health shocks can affect the classroom environment and lead to poor social-emotional outcomes. They found that children who experienced health shocks in early childhood were more likely to have difficulty engaging in classroom activities and performed worse in school. Additionally, their teachers were less likely to provide a supportive learning environment, which can further negatively impact student outcomes.

In this section of Chapter 1, the learner describes the recent history of the problem under study. A summary of results from the prior empirical research on the topic is provided. Learners must identify how they will focus their research to produce an original dissertation. This involves the difference between what is known in a field of research and what is not yet understood. This process involves reading the literature and becoming deeply familiar with how a specific topic has been studied, how the research is trending, and what approaches have been used to study it in order to identify what still needs to be understood.

First, the learner identifies the need for the study, which the dissertation study will address. Strategies learners can use to identify what still needs to be understood include:

* Using results from prior studies.
* Using recommendations for further study.
* Using professional or locally based problems documented in the literature.
* Using broader societal areas of research in current empirical articles.
* Synthesis of problems and approaches to formulate a unique need or problem that still requires additional study.

What needs to be understood through research can be established though various ways (such as those above). What needs to be understood does NOT have to explicitly be stated as a research “gap”, but rather synthesized and justified from the research literature. What needs to be understood must be clearly stated and justified for the reader.This approach should be viewed as an “opportunity” to provide new information about a topic or area based on an in-depth synthesis to identify what still needs to be understood. **For alignment purposes, this same wording must be used whenever there is a reference to what needs to be understood throughout the document.**

Next, the learner builds an argument or justification for the current study by presenting a series of logical arguments, each supported with citations from the literature. A local research need is appropriate for a study. However, the learner needs to situate what needs to be understood by discussing how the research is applicable to/beyond the local setting and may be contributory to professional or broader societal needs. The identification of what needs to be understood, developed from the literature, will be the basis for creating the Problem Statement (in Chapter 2). lopesup

| **Criterion**  **\*(Score = 0, 1, 2, or 3)** | **Learner Score** | **Chair Score** | **Methodologist Score** | **Content Expert Score** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Background of the Study**  (Typically two to three paragraphs or approximately one page) | | | | |
| The learner provides a brief history of the problem space, and a summary of results from the prior research on the topic. |  |  |  |  |
| The learner identifies what still needs to be understood within the problem space.  The learner provides a clear statement of what still needs to be understood: “The research that needs to be better understood is …” |  |  |  |  |
| The learner builds a justification for the current study, using a logical set of arguments supported by appropriate citations. |  |  |  |  |
| Learner situates what needs to be understood by discussing how the research is applicable to/beyond the local setting and may be contributory to professional or broader societal needs. |  |  |  |  |
| The learner writes this section in a way that is well structured, has a logical flow, uses correct paragraph structure, sentence structure, punctuation, and APA format. |  |  |  |  |
| **\*Score each requirement listed in the criteria table using the following scale:**  0 = Item Not Present or Unacceptable. Substantial Revisions are Required.  1 = Item is Present. Does Not Meet Expectations. Revisions are Required.  2 = Item is Acceptable. Meets Expectations. Some Revisions May be Suggested or Required.  3 = Item Exceeds Expectations. No Revisions are Required. | | | | |
| **Reviewer Comments:** | | | | |

## Definition of Terms

In this section the learner describes the study constructs and provides a common understanding of the technical terms, exclusive jargon, phenomena, concepts, and technical terminology used within the scope of the study. The learner defines terms in lay language and in the context in which they are used within the study. A definition of term is typically 1-3 sentences in length. The learner should include any words that may be unknown to a lay person (words with unusual or ambiguous meanings or technical terms).

The learner supports definitions with citations from scholarly sources. *Do not* use *Wikipedia* to define terms. This popular “open source” online encyclopedia can be helpful and interesting for the layperson, but it is not appropriate for formal academic research and writing. Do not use dictionaries to define research terms; these definitions should come from the research literature and scholarly sources. A paragraph introducing this section prior to listing the definition of terms can be inserted. However, a lead-in phrase is needed to introduce the terms such as: “The following terms were used operationally in this study.” This is also a good place to “operationally define” unique phrases specific to this research. See below for the correct format:

Abbreviations*.* Do not use periods with abbreviated measurements, (e.g., cd, ft, lb, mi, and min). The exception to this rule is to use a period when abbreviated inch (in.) to avoid confusion with the word “in.” Units of measurement and statistical abbreviations should only be abbreviated when accompanied by numerical values, e.g., 7 mg, 12 mi, *M* = 7.5 measured in milligrams, several miles after the exit, the means were determined [4.27].

Order. Definitions must be in alphabetical order.

Phenomena. The learner should indicate if any defined terms or concepts are study phenomena and make certain that all study phenomena are included in this list.

Spaces*.* Do not use periods or spaces in abbreviations of all capital letters unless the abbreviation is a proper name or refers to participants using identity-concealing labels. The exception to this rule is that a period is used when abbreviating the United States as an adjective. Use a period if the abbreviation is a Latin abbreviation or a reference abbreviation [4.02]. Use standard newspaper practice when presenting AM and PM times, as in 7:30 PM or 6:00 AM.

Term. Write the definition of the word. This is considered a Level 4 heading. Make sure the definition is properly cited (Author, 2020, p.123). Terms often use abbreviations. According to the American Psychological Association (APA, 2020), abbreviations are best used only when they allow for clear communication with the audience. Standard abbreviations, such as units of measurement and names of states, do not need to be written out.

Time Units*.* Only certain units of time should be abbreviated. Do abbreviate hr, min, ms, ns, s. However, do not abbreviate day, week, month, and year [4.27]. To form the plural of abbreviations, add “s” alone without apostrophe or italicization (e.g., vols, IQs, Eds). The exception to this rule is not to add “s” to pluralize units of measurement (12 m not 12 ms). Refer to APA Manual 7.0 for additional information on abbreviations. lopesup

| **Criterion**  **\*(Score = 0, 1, 2, or 3)** | **Learner Score** | **Chair Score** | **Methodologist Score** | **Content Expert Score** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Definitions of Terms  (Each definition may be a few sentences to a paragraph.) | | | | |
| The learner defines any words that may be unknown to a lay person (words with unusual or ambiguous meanings or technical terms) from the research or literature. |  |  |  |  |
| The learner conceptually defines the phenomena in the study |  |  |  |  |
| The learner supports definitions with citations from scholarly sources, where appropriate. |  |  |  |  |
| The learner writes this section in a way that is well structured, has a logical flow, uses correct paragraph structure, sentence structure, punctuation, and APA format. |  |  |  |  |
| **\*Score each requirement listed in the criteria table using the following scale:**  0 = Item Not Present or Unacceptable. Substantial Revisions are Required.  1 = Item is Present. Does Not Meet Expectations. Revisions are Required.  2 = Item is Acceptable. Meets Expectations. Some Revisions May be Suggested or Required.  3 = Item Exceeds Expectations. No Revisions are Required. | | | | |
| **Reviewer Comments:** | | | | |

## Anticipated Limitations

Anticipated limitations are inherent to the method and design used, which the researcher has no control over, such as bias. In contrast, delimitations are things over which the researcher has control, such as location of the study. Identify the anticipated limitations of the research methodology and design. Provide a rationale for each anticipated limitation and discuss associated consequences for the transferability and applicability of the findings based on the anticipated limitations. The following are examples of anticipated study limitations: lopesup

* Limitations of data sources.
* Self-reported Data. Participants in this investigation will be interviewed and will also complete a short survey. These two sources of data are considered “self-reported” and difficult to independently verify. Therefore, potential bias may exist related to participants recall of the (a particular experience or event) including selective memory, exaggeration, or attribution.
* Limitations of sampling strategy
* Convenience sampling. Potential poor transferability to results.
* Purposive sampling. Potential to be prone to bias.

| **Criterion**  **\*(Score = 0, 1, 2, or 3)** | **Learner Score** | **Chair Score** | **Methodologist Score** | **Content Expert Score** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Anticipated Limitations  (Each limitation may be a few sentences to a paragraph.) | | | | |
| The learner identified anticipated limitations. |  |  |  |  |
| Learner provided a rationale for each anticipated limitation. |  |  |  |  |
| Learner discussed consequences for the transferability and applicability of the findings based on anticipated limitations. |  |  |  |  |
| The learner writes this section in a way that is well structured, has a logical flow, uses correct paragraph structure, sentence structure, punctuation, and APA format. |  |  |  |  |
| **\*Score each requirement listed in the criteria table using the following scale:**  0 = Item Not Present or Unacceptable. Substantial Revisions are Required.  1 = Item is Present. Does Not Meet Expectations. Revisions are Required.  2 = Item is Acceptable. Meets Expectations. Some Revisions May be Suggested or Required.  3 = Item Exceeds Expectations. No Revisions are Required. | | | | |
| **Reviewer Comments:** | | | | |

## Summary and Organization of the Remainder of the Study

For the proposal, the learner must include a project timeline for completion of the dissertation. This may include going through committee review, level 2 peer review, proposal defense, IRB, data collection, data analysis, completing chapters 4 and 5 and updating proposal language, committee review of dissertation, level 5 peer review, dissertation defense, form and formatting, etc. (See the Dissertation Milestones Guide for more information.) When the dissertation is complete, this section should be revised to eliminate the timeline information.

For both the proposal and the dissertation, the learner will also summarize feasibility of the study and complete the feasibility and benefits checklist in Appendix H. The learner will complete the alignment table below (referred to as Table 2 below) and assess if the items are aligned. If the items are not aligned, the learner will work with the committee to discuss alignment until alignment of the items occurs. It is vital that the learner work on alignment during the courses prior to attending the first residency and then continue to use and update the table as the research study matures.

**Insert Project Timeline Here:**

**Table 2**  
  
*Alignment Table*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Alignment Item | Alignment Item Description |
| Problem Space Need: | [State the problem that needs to be better understood – should be one to two sentence(s)] |
| Problem Statement: | [State problem statement] |
| Purpose of the Study: | [State purpose statement] |
| Phenomenon: | [State phenomenon] |
| Research Questions: | [State research questions] |
| Methodology/Research Design: | [State methodology and design] |

Finally, the learner then provides a transition discussion to Chapter 2 followed by a description of the remaining chapters. For example, Chapter 2 will present a review of current research on the centrality of the dissertation literature review in research preparation. Chapter 3 will describe the methodology, research design, and procedures for this investigation. Chapter 4 details how the data was analyzed and provides both a written and graphic summary of the results. Chapter 5 is an interpretation and discussion of the results, as it relates to the existing body of research related to the dissertation topic. lopesup

| **Criterion**  **\*(Score = 0, 1, 2, or 3)** | **Learner Score** | **Chair Score** | **Methodologist Score** | **Content Expert Score** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Chapter 1 Summary and Organization of the remainder of the study  (Typically one to two pages) | | | | |
| FOR PROPOSAL ONLY: The learner provides a project timeline for completion of the dissertation. [Remove this for the dissertation.] |  |  |  |  |
| The learner provides a summary of feasibility of the study. The learner completes Appendix H (Feasibility and Benefits Checklist). |  |  |  |  |
| The learner completes the alignment table above. Furthermore, the items within the table are aligned. |  |  |  |  |
| The learner describes the remaining Chapters and provides a transition discussion to Chapter 2. |  |  |  |  |
| The learner correctly formats the chapter to the Template using the *Word Style Tool* and APA standards. Writing is free of mechanical errors. |  |  |  |  |
| All research presented in the chapter is scholarly, topic-related, and obtained from highly respected academic, professional, original sources. In-text citations are accurate, correctly cited, and included in the reference page according to APA standards. |  |  |  |  |
| The learner writes this section in a way that is well structured, has a logical flow, uses correct paragraph structure, sentence structure, punctuation, and APA format. |  |  |  |  |
| **\*Score each requirement listed in the criteria table using the following scale:**  0 = Item Not Present or Unacceptable. Substantial Revisions are Required.  1 = Item is Present. Does Not Meet Expectations. Revisions are Required.  2 = Item is Acceptable. Meets Expectations. Some Revisions May be Suggested or Required.  3 = Item Exceeds Expectations. No Revisions are Required. | | | | |
| **Reviewer Comments:** | | | | |

# Chapter 2: Literature Review

## Introduction to the Chapter and Background to the Problem

**The minimum progression milestone for draft of Chapter 2 “Acceptance” by chair and submission to content expert is either in dissertation course 960 or 965 as negotiated with the chair. Refer to Appendix L Minimum Progression Milestone Table and the most recent Dissertation Milestone Guide for additional details. Either Dissertation course 960 or 965 is the absolute latest course for Chapter 2 acceptance by chair and submission to content expert. Learners are highly encouraged to work ahead and submit Chapter 2 in earlier dissertation courses.**

In this chapter, the learner presents what needs to be studied within the boundaries of the problem space, presents the theoretical framework for the study, develops the topic, and specifies the problem statement. In order to perform significant dissertation research, the learner must first understand the literature related to the research focus. A well-articulated, thorough literature review provides the foundation for a substantial, contributory dissertation. The purpose of Chapter 2 is for the learner to develop a well-documented argument for what needs to be researched, the selection of the research topic, and formulation of the problem statement. A literature review should be a **synthesis** of what has been published on a topic by accredited scholars and researchers. *It is not an expanded annotated bibliography, or a summary of research articles related to the topic*. It is intended to reflect a deep understanding and synthesis of scholarly sources and empirical literature articles which define what needs to be understood and studied.

The learner uses the literature review to place the research focus into context by analyzing and discussing the existing body of knowledge and effectively telling the reader everything that is known, or everything that has been discovered in research about that focus, and what still needs to be understood in terms of the problems addressed, approaches used, and results produced. As a piece of writing, the literature review must convey to the reader what knowledge and ideas have been established on a topic and build an argument in support of the research problem. Learners are advised to utilize a good source to identify predatory journals. One such source is *Cabell’s Directory of Publishing Opportunities*.

In this section, the learner describes the overall topic to be investigated, and outlines the approach taken for the literature review and the evolution of the problem based on the “problem space” as identified in the literature from its origination to its current form, that is, by the trends in the literature. The learner must make sure that this Introduction to the Chapter and Background to the Problem section addresses all required criteria listed in the rubric table below. Learners may want to create a subsection title for the Introduction section and for the Background to the Problem section to provide clarity to the reader. lopesup

| **Criterion**  **\*(Score = 0, 1, 2, or 3)** | **Learner Score** | **Chair Score** | **Methodologist Score** | **Content Expert Score** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Introduction to the chapter and Background to the problem  (Typically two to three pages) | | | | |
| **Introduction**: The learner provides an orienting paragraph, so the reader knows what the literature review will address. |  |  | **X** |  |
| **Introduction**: The learner describes how the chapter is organized (including the specific sections and subsections). |  |  | **X** |  |
| **Introduction:** The learner describes how the literature was surveyed so the reader can evaluate thoroughness of the review. This includes search terms and databases used. |  |  | **X** |  |
| **Background:** The learner provides a broad overview of how the research topic has evolved historically. |  |  | **X** |  |
| The learner writes this section in a way that is well structured, has a logical flow, uses correct paragraph structure, sentence structure, punctuation, and APA format. |  |  | **X** |  |
| **\*Score each requirement listed in the criteria table using the following scale:**  0 = Item Not Present or Unacceptable. Substantial Revisions are Required.  1 = Item is Present. Does Not Meet Expectations. Revisions are Required.  2 = Item is Acceptable. Meets Expectations. Some Revisions May be Suggested or Required.  3 = Item Exceeds Expectations. No Revisions are Required. | | | | |
| **Reviewer Comments:** | | | | |

## Identification of the Problem Space

While the literature indicates that the environment is a vital component of child development, it is not known in schools and districts if this is considered when planning and implementing educational strategies.

When conducting research on the effects of the environment, especially the classroom environment, on early childhood education, it is essential to select articles that are current and relevant to the research topic. When creating an annotated bibliography, selecting articles is key to understanding the literature on the topic. It is important to consider why the articles were chosen and how they align with the research focus.

For this research, the selection of articles to include in the annotated bibliography was based on their relevance to the research topic and their currentness. The articles selected were current, published within the past five years, and directly focused on the effects of the environment, classroom environment, on early childhood education. Importance was placed on the articles, which included recent research and findings, as well as those that provided a deeper understanding of the impact of the environment on early childhood education.

These articles are essential because they all address the effects of the classroom setting on early childhood education. Specifically, they emphasize student outcomes related to learning, engagement, and motivation in the classroom. In addition, they provide an empirical basis for further research into the effects of the environment on early childhood education and offer a deeper understanding of the environment’s role in student outcomes. Likewise, they provide a way to compare and contrast recent findings and research studies to gain a deeper understanding of the research topic.

The notion of the “problem space” is an approach GCU uniquely uses to support learning how to approach the identification of the gap. GCU has adapted the concept of the problem space from the fields of cognitive psychology and design (including interaction design, user experience design, and research and development (Card, Moran, & Newell, 1983; Colman, 2015; Euchner, 2019; Hora, 2016; Norman, 1986; Spradlin, 2012; Yoon, 2001). These disciplines and approaches share the premise that the problem space is composed of the thinking and set of key issues or components that produce a well-defined problem. For doctoral learners at GCU, a well-defined problem produces a tightly defined Problem Statement.

The topic, the problem statements that other researchers have defined, and the approaches that other researchers have taken, all constitute the “problem space” for a study. The problem space is a way to help you establish some boundaries for the literature review, so that you have a clear idea of what to include and what to exclude. What needs to be known or understood is the *result* of the analysis of the literature review within the problem space, and the problem statement expresses how the proposed study will address what needs to be known or understood.

Becoming deeply familiar with how a specific topic has been studied involves reading and synthesizing the literature related to the problem space, focusing primarily on the past five years. Lack of research on a topic or personal interest in an unresearched topic are not sufficient reasons to do a dissertation. Just because something has not been researched does not mean it should be. Therefore, the learner must be “well read” on their topic to identify ways their study will add to the existing body of knowledge on the topic. The learner should explain why the extant theories and empirical studies need further inquiry.

The problem space is thus comprised of identifying what is known and not yet understood about a topic, understanding how it has come to be known (the theories, designs, methods, instruments) and then figuring out what is not yet known. The result of this deep and systematic thinking results in identifying the problem to be addressed in the research study, and the resulting well-structured problem statement.

All learners must identify how they will focus their research to produce an original dissertation. This involves the difference between what is known or understood in a field of research and what is not yet known or understood. This process involves reading the literature and becoming deeply familiar with how a specific topic has been studied, how the research is trending, and what approaches have been used to study it in order to identify what still needs to be known or understood.

Practice-based research may initially define the problem based in a practice within an organization or setting. **However, the approach to investigating the problem needs to follow scholarly research procedures**. This means that the problem space needs to include literature that is scholarly in nature so that the proposed dissertation research will advance knowledge and practice. The literature review should include peer-reviewed articles from research-based journals as well as journals on professional practice and research-based industry journals.

There are a variety of ways to synthesize the literature. Below is a set of steps that may be used:

* First, explore original literature on the topic. The topic should focus on an issue pertinent to the learner’s program of study to determine what has been discovered and what still needs to be understood.
* Second, while exploring the original literature identify the broad topics and problems researched. Explore the evolution of the research on the problem. How did the focus change? What findings emerged from these studies?
* Third, describe the research from the past 2 to 3 years to discover what has been discovered, what problems have been studied, and what still needs to be understood. Discuss the trends and themes that emerged. Studies that were published within the past 2-3 years will still be relevant (within the past 5 years) at the point of graduation.
* **Note:** Problem space for the dissertation study should **primarily** come from the empirical research literature or studies dated within three to five years of the learner’s projected graduation date. ***This is a recommendation, not a rule.***
* Dissertations can be used to support the problem space; however, one must supplement dissertation citations with citations from other peer-reviewed research on the topic.
* Fourth, define the topic and problem statement by synthesizing the recent studies, including trends, and define what still needs to be understood.

While the verbiage in this section highlights a set of steps designed to help GCU doctoral learners identify what still needs to be understood for their study, there are other methods that can be used. These include using recommendations for future research from prior studies and literature reviews, adding to a broadly researched area through clearly targeted research, reframing problems to focus the research on identifying the solutions, and synthesizing areas of research to define a new or innovative area of research. This section must clearly identify the specific sources that form the basis for what will become the problem for the study.

In the last part of this section, the learner will describe how the study is situated within the problem space established in the previous discussion within this section. The learner should also describe how the study may add to the body of literature. Finally, the learner should discuss any potential practical or professional applications that might occur as an outcome or application of the study. For additional information on the Problem Space see the DC Network>Dissertation Resources>Scholarly Writing Resources folder. lopesup

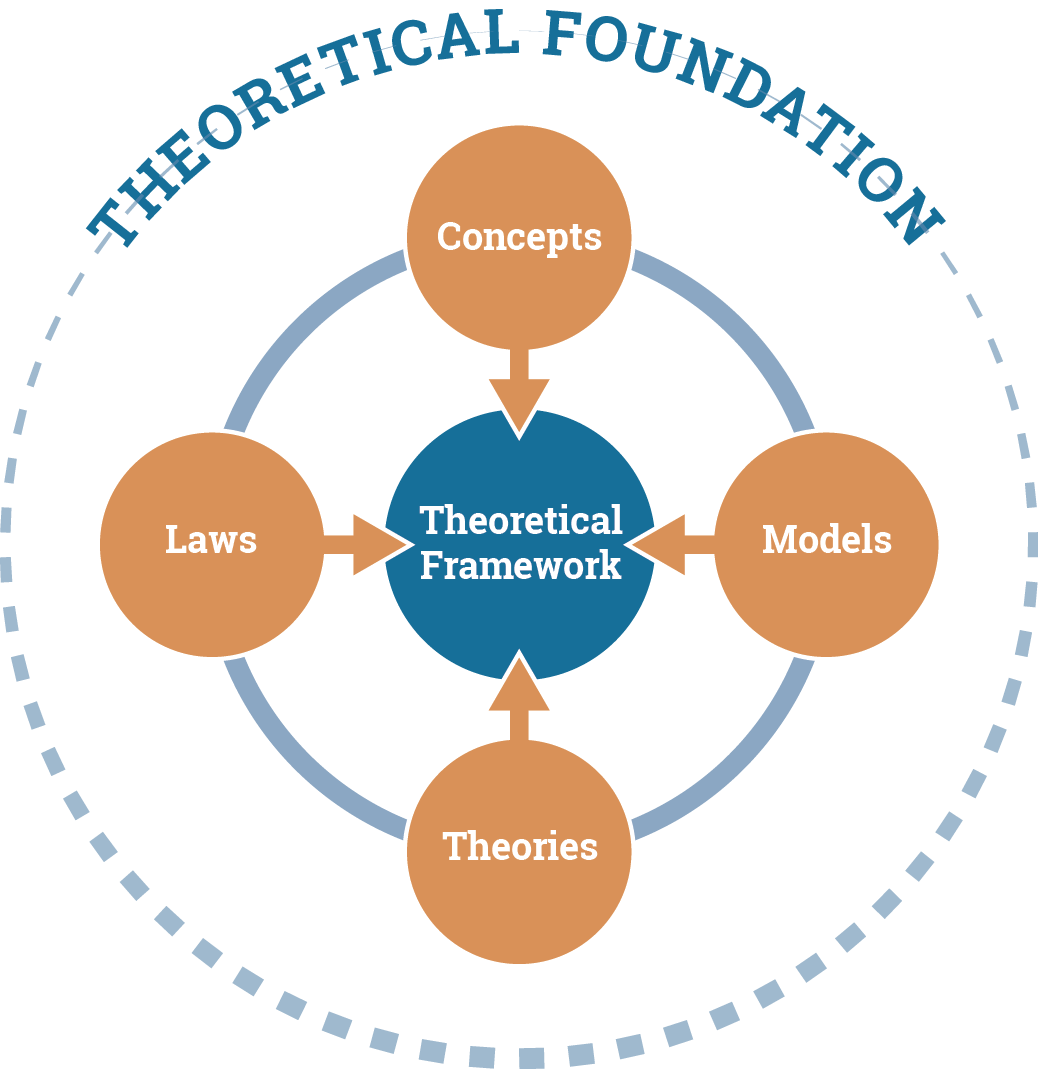
| **Criterion**  **\*(Score = 0, 1, 2, or 3)** | **Learner Score** | **Chair Score** | **Methodologist Score** | **Content Expert Score** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Identification of the Problem Space  (Typically two or three pages) | | | | |
| The learner provides a detailed description of how the problem space has evolved over time, and the effects it has had on the research (research trends). |  |  | **X** |  |
| The learner summarizes the problem space, highlighting what has been discovered and what still needs to be understood related to the topic from literature or research dated primarily within the last five years. |  |  | **X** |  |
| The learner discusses and synthesizes the evolution of the research on the problem. Specifically:   * Identifies the key sources used as the basis for the problem space * Identifies trends in research and literature. * Identifies how the research focus has changed over the recent past (five years). * Discusses key findings that emerged from recent studies. * Discusses prior research and defined future research needs. |  |  | **X** |  |
| From the findings of research studies and evolution of recent literature on the topic, the learner defines the parameters for problem statement for the study. |  |  | **X** |  |
| The learner describes how the study will contribute to the body of literature. |  |  | **X** |  |
| The learner describes the potential practical or professional applications from the research. |  |  | **X** |  |
| The learner writes this section in a way that is well structured, has a logical flow, uses correct paragraph structure, sentence structure, punctuation, and APA format. |  |  | **X** |  |
| **\*Score each requirement listed in the criteria table using the following scale:**  0 = Item Not Present or Unacceptable. Substantial Revisions are Required.  1 = Item is Present. Does Not Meet Expectations. Revisions are Required.  2 = Item is Acceptable. Meets Expectations. Some Revisions May be Suggested or Required.  3 = Item Exceeds Expectations. No Revisions are Required. | | | | |
| **Reviewer Comments:** | | | | |

## Theoretical Foundations

This section identifies theories or models from seminal sources that provide the foundation for the research, guide the research questions, justify the phenomena under investigation. In this section, the learner should cite the seminal source(s) along with references reflective of the foundational, historical, and current literature in the field, and should demonstrate overall understanding of the related theories or models and their relevance to the proposed study. Additionally, this section describes how the dissertation research will add to or extend the theories or models. For example, Cullison (2020) conducted a qualitative case study to understand the how community members and school personnel described the influence of that community art projects had on their willingness to collaborate. Allport’s (1954) contact theory and Epstein’s (1987) model of involvement comprised the theoretical foundations of the study. These were aligned with phenomena of public arts as a novel approach for effecting changed perceptions or prejudices toward a school.

A dissertation presents the theories, models, or concepts that provide the foundation or building blocks for developing the research questions and hypotheses as well as for collecting the data. Once the researcher identifies the theories, models, and/or concepts that will provide the foundation for their research, they use this information to develop the research questions that provides the focus for their research (see Figure 2).

**Figure 2**  
  
*Incorporating Theories and Models of Research*



The theoretical framework considers the problem statement for the research as it identifies the theories, models, and/or concepts the researcher will use to develop the research questions for their specific study. In addition, these theories, models, and concepts help the researcher identify or create protocols to collect data, as well as other data collection approaches. Researchers define the concepts of theories, models, and laws differently. Table 3 provides definitions and examples.

**Table 3**  
  
*Description of Building Blocks for the Theoretical Foundations Section*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Types of Building Blocks | Definition of the Building Blocks | Examples of the Building Blocks |
| Theories | A concise and coherent broad explanation for an observed phenomenon, which is predictive. For a theory to be accepted, it must be supported in multiple forms or evidence or research. The evidence can include different observations and tests and may come from different fields of study. | Scapegoat theory  Planned behavior theory  Game theory  Goal-setting theory |
| Models | A visual display of a theory, showing the relationships between a set of concepts or a list of steps in a process. | Resilience model  EI model  Change leadership model  Balanced scorecard model |
| Concepts or Ideas | A general notion or idea; conception. An idea of something formed by mentally combining all its characteristics or particulars. A construct. A directly conceived or intuited object of thought (Dictionary.com, 2017).  Concepts can be measured. | Trustworthiness  Bias  Gender  Age  Profit |

Some researchers go beyond describing the theories, models, and concepts they used to develop their research questions. They identify additional related theories, models, and concepts. When using this broader approach, this section becomes a Conceptual Framework. In this section, the researcher compares and contrasts the various theories, models, and concepts, ultimately justifying the ones most relevant to the research.

Developing the Theoretical Foundations section requires a step-by-step approach as described in Table 4. To begin, researchers identify the models, theories, or concepts that are relevant for the problem statement. The researcher commonly finds this information in the same literature in which they found the theory, model, or concept. For a qualitative study, if the researchers were trying to identify 1-3 models that would help provide the basis for describing the phenomenon under study and were studying how effective change leadership influences an organization, they could use a Change Leadership model.

**Table 4**  
  
*Steps for the Theoretical Foundations Section*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Steps | Focus of Each Step | |
| Step 1: Identify theories, models, and/or concepts. | • | Review the literature, particularly from the Background of the Problem section, and identify potential theories, models, and concepts used in similar or related research. |
| • | Or search Google Scholar and Google for terms from the problem statement. Name and describe the ones planned for use in the study. |
| Step 2: Relate the theories, models, and/or concepts to the problem statement. | • | Describe how the selected theories, models, and/or concepts are relevant to the problem statement. |
|  | • | Focus on the components of the phenomenon explored through the problem statement. |
| Step 3: Develop the research questions and hypotheses based on the problem statement and the selected theories, models and/or concepts. | • | The selected theories, models, and concepts help frame the research questions differently for qualitative and quantitative research. |
|  | • | Identify 1–3 theories, models, or concepts that are related to the phenomenon being studied. Develop research questions based on those 1–3 theories, models, or concepts. |

After selecting the theories, models, and/or concepts, researchers discuss how each relates to the problem statement. For a qualitative study this means discussing how theory or model frames research on the phenomenon. Finally, researchers develop the research questions for their study using the models.

The problem space addresses what the researcher will study, and the paradigm—the theoretical foundation—speaks to how the study approaches the research problem. In other words, the theoretical foundation explains the way the researcher shapes the study as they have. lopesup

| **Criterion**  **\*(Score = 0, 1, 2, or 3)** | **Learner Score** | **Chair Score** | **Methodologist Score** | **Content Expert Score** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Theoretical Foundations  (Typically two or three pages) | | | | |
| The learner discusses the theoretical foundation and, where appropriate, the extended conceptual framework that undergird and frame the study. |  |  | **X** |  |
| The learner identifies theory(ies), model(s), and/or concept(s) from seminal source(s) that provide the theoretical foundation to use in developing the research questions, identifying phenomena, and describing the sources of data. |  |  | **X** |  |
| The learner cites the appropriate seminal source(s) for each theory, model, or concept. |  |  | **X** |  |
| The learner includes a cogent discussion/synthesis of the theories, models and concepts, and justifies the theoretical foundation/framework as relevant to the problem statement for the study. The learner connects the study directly to the theory and describes how the study adds or extends the theory, model, or concept. |  |  | **X** |  |
| The learner’s discussion reflects understanding of the foundational and historical research relevant to the theoretical foundation. |  |  | **X** |  |
| The learner writes this section in a way that is well structured, has a logical flow, uses correct paragraph structure, sentence structure, punctuation, and APA format. |  |  | **X** |  |
| **\*Score each requirement listed in the criteria table using the following scale:**  0 = Item Not Present or Unacceptable. Substantial Revisions are Required.  1 = Item is Present. Does Not Meet Expectations. Revisions are Required.  2 = Item is Acceptable. Meets Expectations. Some Revisions May be Suggested or Required.  3 = Item Exceeds Expectations. No Revisions are Required. | | | | |
| **Reviewer Comments:** | | | | |

## Review of the Literature

In this section the learner provides a broad, balanced overview of the existing literature related to the research topic. The Review of the Literature includes themes, trends, and conflicts in research methodology, design, and findings. The learner provides a synthesis of the existing literature, examines the contributions of the literature related to the topic, and discusses the methodological approaches used for the research based on related empirical studies. Through this synthesis, the learner applies this information to define the problem space and what still need to be understood, as well as to the creation of the plan and approach for their study.

The learner must provide scholarly citations for all ideas, concepts, and perspectives. The learner’s personal opinions or perspectives are not included, and the research of others must be properly attributed, cited, and referenced. **The Review of the Literature section should be approximately 30 pages. (30 pages reflects a typical dissertation literature review in length and is a recommendation, not a rule).** It is important not to get caught up in the number of pages but rather focus the breadth, depth and quality of the literature review is support of the study. A well-written, comprehensive literature review will likely exceed 30 pages.

The literature review must be continuously updated throughout the dissertation research and writing process. To ensure a current, relevant literature review, the majority of references in Chapter 2 (approximately 75%) should be within the past five years. This is a recommendation, not a hard, fast rule as the learner, chair and content expert should evaluate the overall quality, and relevancy of scholarly sources presented in this chapter. Other requirements for the literature review include:

* The learner will describe the phenomenon/a in the study discussing the prior empirical research that has been done on the phenomena.
* The learner will discuss the various methodologies and designs that have been used to research topics related to the study. The learner uses this information as a part of the arguments to justify the design in Chapter 3.
* The learner will argue the appropriateness of the dissertation’s instruments, measures, and/or approaches used to collect data.
* The learner will discuss and synthesize studies related to the dissertation topic. This may include (1) studies describing and/or relating the phenomenon, (2) studies on related research such as factors associated with the themes, (3) studies on the instruments used to collect data, (4) studies on the broad population for the study, (5) studies defining the need from a community, professional, or organizational perspective, and/or (6) studies similar to the topic. The themes presented, and research studies discussed and synthesized in the Review of Literature demonstrates a deep understanding of all aspects of the research topic. The set of topics discussed in the Review of Literature must demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of the broad area in which the research topic exists.
* For each major section in Review of the Literature, the learner will include an introductory paragraph that explains why the topic was explored relative to the dissertation topic.
* For each major section in Review of the Literature, the learner will include a summary paragraph(s) that (1) compares and contrasts alternative perspectives on the topic, (2) provides a synthesis of the themes relative to the research topic discussed that emerged from the literature, (3) discusses data from the various studies, and (4) identifies how themes are relevant to the dissertation topic.
* The types of references that may be used in the literature review include empirical articles, peer-reviewed or scholarly journal articles, scholarly studies from foundations and governmental organizations, a limited number of dissertations (no more than 5 recommended), and books (no more than 5-10 recommended) that present cutting-edge views on a topic, are research based, or are seminal works.
* The learner will expand on and provide additional arguments for what still needs to be known or understood (the need for the study) that was defined in the Background of the Problem section.

The learner may organize the body of a literature review in a variety of ways depending on the nature of the research. However, the approach taken to the organization and flow of the topics for the Review of Literature section must be explained clearly and included in an introductory section of Review of the Literature. Learners will work with the committee, particularly the chair and content expert to determine the best way to organize this section of Chapter 2.

Chapter 2 can be particularly challenging regarding APA format for citations and quotations. The learner should refer to the APA manual frequently to make sure citations are formatted properly. It is critical that each in-text citation is appropriately listed in the References section. Incorrectly citing and referencing sources is a serious scholarly and ethical violation, particularly when writing a dissertation. As an emerging scholar, learners must demonstrate the capability and responsibility to properly cite and reference every single source referenced in the literature review and throughout the dissertation. Note that all in-text citations within parentheses must be listed in alphabetical order with semicolons between each citation (e.g., Barzun & Graff, 1992; Calabrese, 2006; Hacker, et al., 2008; Mason, 2010; Nock, 1943; Squires & Kranyik, 1995; Strunk & White, 1979).

In general, “brief quotes,” or quotes of fewer than about 40 words should be avoided. The learner should paraphrase in almost all situations except where the actual words in the quote have significance. For example, we would not paraphrase, “Four score and seven years ago…” If such a quote is used, incorporate it into the narrative and enclose it with double quotation marks. The in-text citation is included after the final punctuation mark [6.03], and the final punctuation mark in quoted text should be placed inside the quotation mark.

For a quote within a quote, use a set of single quotation marks. Here is an example of a direct quote within a quote integrated into the narrative. In the classic introspective autobiography, *The Memoirs of a Superfluous Man,* one reads that, “one never knows when or where the spirit’s breathe will rest, or what will come of its touch. ‘The spirit breathes where it will,’ said the *Santissimo Salvatore*, ‘and thou hearest the sound thereof, but cannot tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth.’” (Nock, 1943, p.187) [4.08].

As a rule, if a quote comprises 40 or more words, display this material as a freestanding block quote. Start formal block quotes on a new line. They are indented 0.5 inches in from the left margin. The entire block quote is double-spaced. Quotation marks are *not* used with formal block quotes. The in-text citation is included after the final punctuation mark. [6.03]. Below is an example of a block quote: In an important biography, *The First American: The Life and Times of Benjamin Franklin*, historian H. W. Brands wrote:

In February 1731, Franklin became a Freemason. Shortly thereafter, he volunteered to draft the bylaws for the embryonic local chapter, named for St. John the Baptist; upon acceptance of the bylaws, he was elected Warden and subsequently Master of the Lodge. Within three years, he became Grandmaster of all of Pennsylvania's Masons. Not unforeseeable he—indeed, this was much of the purpose of membership for everyone involved—his fellow Masons sent business Franklin’s way. In 1734 he printed *The* *Constitutions*, the first formerly sponsored Masonic book in America; he derived additional [printing] work from his brethren on an unsponsored basis. (Brands, 2000, p. 113) lopesup

| **Criterion**  **\*(Score = 0, 1, 2, or 3)** | **Learner Score** | **Chair Score** | **Methodologist Score** | **Content Expert Score** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Review of the Literature  (Approximately 30 pages) | | | | |
| The learner assures that this section of Chapter 2 should be approximately 30 pages. (Thirty pages reflects a typical literature review length and is *a recommendation, not a rule).* The purpose of the minimum number of pages is to ensure that the overall literature review reflects a foundational understanding of the theory or theories, literature and research studies related to the topic. A well-written comprehensive literature review that reflects the current state of research and literature on the topic is expected and will likely exceed 30 pages. Literature reviews are updated continuously. This is an ongoing process to dissertation completion. |  |  | **X** |  |
| The learner describes the phenomena being explored in the study discussing the prior research that has been done on the phenomena. |  |  | **X** |  |
| **Themes or Topics:** The learner discusses and synthesizes studies related to the dissertation topic. May include (1) studies focused on the problem from a societal perspective, (2) studies describing and/or relating the exploring related phenomena (qualitative), (3) studies on related research such as factors associated with the themes, (4) studies on the methodological approach and instruments used to collect data, (5) studies on the broad population for the study, and/or (6) studies similar to the study. The themes presented, and research studies discussed and synthesized in the Review of the Literature demonstrates understanding of all aspects of the research topic, the research methodology, and sources of data. |  |  | **X** |  |
| The learner structures the literature review in a logical order, including actual data and accurate synthesis of results from reviewed studies as related to the learner’s own topic. The learner provides synthesis of the information, not just a summary of the findings or annotation of articles. |  |  | **X** |  |
| The learner includes in each major section (theme or topic) within the Review of the Literature an introductory paragraph that explains why the topic or theme was explored relative to the overall dissertation topic. |  |  | **X** |  |
| The learner includes in each section within the Review of the Literature a summary paragraph(s) that (1) compares and contrasts alternative perspectives on the topic and (2) provides a synthesis of the themes relative to the research topic discussed that emerged from the literature, and (3) identifies how themes are relevant to the dissertation topic and research methodology. |  |  | **X** |  |
| The learner provides additional arguments for the need for the study that was defined in the Background of the Study section. |  |  | **X** |  |
| The learner ensures that for every in-text citation a reference entry exists. Conversely, for every reference list entry there is a corresponding in-text citation. **Note:** The accuracy of citations and quality of sources is verified by learner, chair, and content expert. |  |  | **X** |  |
| The learner uses a range of references including founding theorists, peer-reviewed empirical research studies from scholarly journals, and governmental/foundation research reports. |  |  | **X** |  |
| The learner verifies that all references are scholarly sources. **NOTE:** Websites, dictionaries, publications without dates (n.d.), are not considered scholarly sources and are not cited or present in the reference list. |  |  | **X** |  |
| The learner avoids overuse of books and dissertations.  **Books:** Recommendation: No more than 10 scholarly books that present cutting edge views on a topic, are research based, or are seminal works.  **Dissertations:** Recommendation: No more than five published dissertations should be cited as sources in the manuscript. (This is *a recommendation, not a rule*). |  |  | **X** |  |
| The learner writes this section in a way that is well structured, has a logical flow, uses correct paragraph structure, sentence structure, punctuation, and APA format. |  |  | **X** |  |
| **\*Score each requirement listed in the criteria table using the following scale:**  0 = Item Not Present or Unacceptable. Substantial Revisions are Required.  1 = Item is Present. Does Not Meet Expectations. Revisions are Required.  2 = Item is Acceptable. Meets Expectations. Some Revisions May be Suggested or Required.  3 = Item Exceeds Expectations. No Revisions are Required. | | | | |
| **Reviewer Comments:** | | | | |

## Problem Statement

The learner should begin the Problem Statement section with a declarative problem statement based on the Identification of Problem Space and Review of the Literature sections above. Some examples of how to phrase a problem statement include:

* It is not known how or why…
* Based on what is known in literature, \_\_\_\_\_ is still unknown/what still needs to be understood is…
* While the literature indicates \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, it is not known in (school/district/organization/community) how/why \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

**Keep in mind that Problem Statements can be presented in a variety of ways that reflects what needs to be understood within the parameters established by the problem space. Once the Problem Statement is established, for alignment purposes, when the Problem Statement is restated in other chapters, it should be worded exactly as presented in this section.**

This section then describes the general population affected by the problem along with the importance, scope or opportunity for the problem and the importance of addressing the problem. Questions to consider when writing the problem include:

1. What still needs to be understood from the research literature that this problem statement addresses?
2. What is the real issue that is affecting society, students, local organizations or businesses and/or professional practice?
3. At what frequency is the problem occurring?
4. Why has the problem not been well understood in the past?
5. What does the literature and research say about how the problem should be addressed at this time? lopesup

| **Criterion**  **\*(Score = 0, 1, 2, or 3)** | **Learner Score** | **Chair Score** | **Methodologist Score** | **Content Expert Score** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Problem Statement  (Typically three or four paragraphs or approximately one page) | | | | |
| The learner states the specific problem for research with a clear declarative statement. |  |  | **X** |  |
| The learner describes the population of interest. The population of interest includes all individuals that could be affected by the study problem.  **EXAMPLE**: The population of interest might be *all adults in the United States who are 65 or older*. The target population is a more specific subpopulation from the population of interest, such as *low-income older adults ( ≥ 65) in AZ*. Thus, the sample is selected from the target population, not from the population of interest. |  |  | **X** |  |
| The learner discusses the scope and importance of addressing the problem. |  |  | **X** |  |
| The learner develops the Problem Statement based on what needs to be understood as defined in the Problem Space and the Review of the Literature. |  |  | **X** |  |
| The learner writes this section in a way that is well structured, has a logical flow, uses correct paragraph structure, sentence structure, punctuation, and APA format. |  |  | **X** |  |
| **\*Score each requirement listed in the criteria table using the following scale:**  0 = Item Not Present or Unacceptable. Substantial Revisions are Required.  1 = Item is Present. Does Not Meet Expectations. Revisions are Required.  2 = Item is Acceptable. Meets Expectations. Some Revisions May be Suggested or Required.  3 = Item Exceeds Expectations. No Revisions are Required. | | | | |
| **Reviewer Comments:** | | | | |

## Summary

In this section, the learner succinctly restates what was written in Chapter 2 and provides supporting citations for key points. This section should reflect that learners have done their "due diligence" to become well-read on the topic and can conduct a study that is contributory to the existing body of research and knowledge on the topic. The learner synthesizes the information from the chapter to define the problem space arising from the literature, what needs to be studied, the theory(is) or model(s) to provide the foundation for the study, and the problem statement. Overall, the information on this section should help the reader clearly see and understand the relevance and importance of the research to be conducted. The learner should close the Summary with a transition to Chapter 3. lopesup

| **Criterion**  **\*(Score = 0, 1, 2, or 3)** | **Learner Score** | **Chair Score** | **Methodologist Score** | **Content Expert Score** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Chapter 2 Summary  (Typically one or two pages) | | | | |
| The learner synthesizes the information from all prior sections in the Literature Review using it to define the key strategic points for the research. |  |  | **X** |  |
| The learner summarizes the problem space, what still needs to be understood, and how it informs the problem statement. |  |  | **X** |  |
| The learner identifies the theory(ies) or model(s) describing how they inform the research questions. |  |  | **X** |  |
| The learner builds a case (argument) for the study in terms of the value of the research and how the problem statement emerged from the identification of the problem space and review of literature. |  |  | **X** |  |
| The content of this section reflects that learners have done their “due diligence” in synthesizing the existing empirical research and writing a comprehensive literature review on the research topic. |  |  | **X** |  |
| The learner summarizes key points in Chapter 2 and transitions into Chapter 3. |  |  | **X** |  |
| The chapter is correctly formatted to dissertation template using *the Word Style Tool* and APA standards. Writing is free of mechanical errors. |  |  | **X** |  |
| All research presented in the chapter is scholarly, topic-related, and obtained from highly respected, academic, professional, original sources. In-text citations are accurate, correctly cited and included in the reference page according to APA standards. |  |  | **X** |  |
| The learner writes this section in a way that is well structured, has a logical flow, uses correct paragraph structure, sentence structure, punctuation, and APA format. |  |  | **X** |  |
| **\*Score each requirement listed in the criteria table using the following scale:**  0 = Item Not Present or Unacceptable. Substantial Revisions are Required.  1 = Item is Present. Does Not Meet Expectations. Revisions are Required.  2 = Item is Acceptable. Meets Expectations. Some Revisions May be Suggested or Required.  3 = Item Exceeds Expectations. No Revisions are Required. | | | | |
| **Reviewer Comments:** | | | | |

# Chapter 3: Methodology

## Introduction

**The minimum progression milestone for draft of Chapter 3 “Acceptance” by chair and submission to methodologist is either in dissertation course 960 or 965 as negotiated with your chair. Refer to Appendix L Minimum Progression Milestone Table and the most recent Dissertation Milestone Guide for additional details. Either Dissertation course 960 or 965 is the absolute latest course for Chapter 3 acceptance by chair and submission to methodologist. Learners are highly encouraged to work ahead and submit Chapter 3 in earlier dissertation courses.**

In Chapter 3 the learner documents how the study will be conducted, including enough detail that another researcher could follow the steps. The learner begins the chapter with the Problem Statement, which should be worded exactly as presented in Chapter 2. The learner provides a re-orienting summary of the research focus (topic and what still needs to be understood) as described in Chapters 1 and 2 and outlines the expectations for Chapter 3. There should be no “new” information in this section.

Remember, throughout this chapter, that verb tense must be changed from present or future tense (proposal) to past tense (dissertation manuscript). At the dissertation stage, all comments regarding “the proposed research” or “the proposal” must be removed and edited to reflect the fact that the research has been conducted. Furthermore, consider what happened during data collection and analysis. Sometimes, the research protocol ends up being modified based on committee, peer review, or Institutional Review Board (IRB) recommendations. After the research study is complete, carefully review this chapter, and provide an explanation (in Chapter 4) on alterations to data collection or analysis protocols, reflecting on how the study was actually conducted. lopesup

| **Criterion**  **\*(Score = 0, 1, 2, or 3)** | **Learner Score** | **Chair Score** | **Methodologist Score** | **Content Expert Score** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Chapter 3 Introduction  (Typically two or three paragraphs) | | | | |
| The learner begins by restating the Problem Statement for the study. |  |  |  | **X** |
| The learner provides a re-orienting summary of the research focus from Chapter 2 and outlines the expectations for this chapter. |  |  |  | **X** |
| The learner writes this section in a way that is well structured, has a logical flow, uses correct paragraph structure, sentence structure, punctuation, and APA format. |  |  |  | **X** |
| **\*Score each requirement listed in the criteria table using the following scale:**  0 = Item Not Present or Unacceptable. Substantial Revisions are Required.  1 = Item is Present. Does Not Meet Expectations. Revisions are Required.  2 = Item is Acceptable. Meets Expectations. Some Revisions May be Suggested or Required.  3 = Item Exceeds Expectations. No Revisions are Required. | | | | |
| **Reviewer Comments:** | | | | |

## Purpose of the Study

In this section, the learner states the purpose statement and introduces how the study will be accomplished. The section should begin with a declarative statement, “The purpose of this ….” Included in this statement are also the research methodology and design, target population, and the geographic location. For example, if the Problem Statement is: *It is not known how women small business owners make strategic business decisions when planning the expansion of their companies*, then the Purpose Statement would be: *The purpose of the qualitative case study is to understand how women small business owners in the U.S. northeast region make strategic business decisions when planning the expansion of their companies.* **For alignment, when the purpose of the study is restated in other chapters of the proposal it should be worded exactly as presented in this section.**  lopesup

| **Criterion**  **\*(Score = 0, 1, 2, or 3)** | **Learner Score** | **Chair Score** | **Methodologist Score** | **Content Expert Score** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Purpose of the Study  (Typically one or two paragraphs) | | | | |
| This section begins with one sentence that identifies the research methodology, design, problem statement, target population, and geographic location. This is presented as a declarative statement: "The purpose of this qualitative [*design*] study is to … [*include the Problem Statement*] at a [setting/geographic location]." |  |  |  | **X** |
| The learner introduces how the study will be carried out. |  |  |  | **X** |
| The learner writes this section in a way that is well structured, has a logical flow, uses correct paragraph structure, sentence structure, punctuation, and APA format. |  |  |  | **X** |
| **\*Score each requirement listed in the criteria table using the following scale:**  0 = Item Not Present or Unacceptable. Substantial Revisions are Required.  1 = Item is Present. Does Not Meet Expectations. Revisions are Required.  2 = Item is Acceptable. Meets Expectations. Some Revisions May be Suggested or Required.  3 = Item Exceeds Expectations. No Revisions are Required. | | | | |
| **Reviewer Comments:** | | | | |

## Phenomenon and Research Questions

In this section the learner needs to describe the phenomenon to be understood as a result of the study and state the research questions. This must include a discussion of how the research questions address the problem statement. The section also includes a brief discussion of how the data to be used to address the research questions will be obtained. This will include high-level descriptions of the instrument(s), protocols, and any other data collection methods that will be used as sources of data. Below is an example of a correctly stated research question for a case study design:

RQ1: How do women small business owners make strategic business decisions when planning the expansion of their companies. lopesup

| **Criterion**  **\*(Score = 0, 1, 2, or 3)** | **Learner Score** | **Chair Score** | **Methodologist Score** | **Content Expert Score** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Phenomenon and Research Questions  (Typically one or two pages) | | | | |
| The learner establishes the research questions, and defines the phenomenon/a |  |  |  | **X** |
| The learner describes the nature and sources of necessary data to answer the research questions (primary versus secondary data, specific people, institutional archives, Internet open sources, etc.).  The learner describes the data collection methods, instrument(s) or data source(s) to collect the data for each research question. |  |  |  | **X** |
| The learner writes this section in a way that is well structured, has a logical flow, uses correct paragraph structure, sentence structure, punctuation, and APA format. |  |  |  | **X** |
| **\*Score each requirement listed in the criteria table using the following scale:**  0 = Item Not Present or Unacceptable. Substantial Revisions are Required.  1 = Item is Present. Does Not Meet Expectations. Revisions are Required.  2 = Item is Acceptable. Meets Expectations. Some Revisions May be Suggested or Required.  3 = Item Exceeds Expectations. No Revisions are Required. | | | | |
| **Reviewer Comments:** | | | | |

## Rationale for a Qualitative Methodology

In this section the learner establishes the rationale for selecting a qualitative methodology for the study. For example, the learner may include arguments based on the empirical studies used in the Review of the Literature in Chapter 2. The learner should justify the epistemological foundation for the choice of a qualitative methodology. The learner should include an argument for why the selected methodology is better than the alternative methodologies (quantitative or mixed methods) based on what still needs to be understood from the problem space, problem statement, and research questions. The learner should support arguments using citations from authoritative authors/seminal sources on research methodology and/or design. The citation should be a complete sentence which provides evidence to support the learner’s argument and not merely the author and date information in a set of parentheses, It is important that the rationale provided in this section leaves no doubt that the qualitative methodology is the best methodological approach for the study, over quantitative. Please note that GCU does not support mixed methods research for doctoral learners due to complexity of the research designs and time to complete a mixed method study. lopesup

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Criterion**  **\*(Score = 0, 1, 2, or 3)** | **Learner Score** | **Chair Score** | **Methodologist Score** | **Content Expert Score** |
| Rationale for a Qualitative Methodology  (Typically one or two pages) | | | | |
| The learner defines and describes the chosen methodology. |  |  |  | **X** |
| The learner provides a rationale for choosing a qualitative methodology, based on what still needs to be understood from the problem space, problem statement, and research questions. |  |  |  | **X** |
| The learner provides a rationale for the selected methodology based on **empirical studies** on the topic. |  |  |  | **X** |
| The learner justifies why the methodology was selected as opposed to alternative methodologies. |  |  |  | **X** |
| The learner uses authoritative source(s) to justify the selected methodology. ***Note:*** *Do not use introductory research textbooks (such as Creswell or internal GCU research course e-books) to justify the research design and data analysis approach.* |  |  |  | **X** |
| The learner writes this section in a way that is well structured, has a logical flow, uses correct paragraph structure, sentence structure, punctuation, and APA format. |  |  |  | **X** |
| **\*Score each requirement listed in the criteria table using the following scale:**  0 = Item Not Present or Unacceptable. Substantial Revisions are Required.  1 = Item is Present. Does Not Meet Expectations. Revisions are Required.  2 = Item is Acceptable. Meets Expectations. Some Revisions May be Suggested or Required.  3 = Item Exceeds Expectations. No Revisions are Required. | | | | |
| **Reviewer Comments:** | | | | |

## Rationale for Research Design

The learner uses this section to establish the Rationale for the Research Design for the study. The learner includes a detailed description of, and a rationale for, the specific design for the study and describes how it aligns to the qualitative methodology indicated in the previous section. GCU’s pre-approved core designs for qualitative studies include qualitative descriptive, phenomenology, qualitative case study, narrative, and grounded theory. The learner should use articles from Chapter 2 to support design choice. In addition, the learner may use methodology articles or scholarly books by thought leaders on the design. See Table 5 for the designs and descriptions of the designs. lopesup

**Table 5**  
  
*Qualitative Core Designs and Descriptions*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Design | Description |
| Qualitative Descriptive | A poorly understood phenomenon is described at a manifest, overt level, that is, what is apparent but as yet undescribed. This design should focus on developing an extensive description of the phenomenon. |
| Phenomenology | The essence of human experience with a phenomenon as “lived” in a way that it is unique to each individual. “Lived experience” focuses the way the participants experience the situation emotionally, reflectively. |
| Qualitative Case Study | An in-depth investigation of one or more cases that will triangulate to achieve holistic description.  Study of a case that is in depth, using three or more sources of data to understand the phenomena in its complexity to achieve an in-depth treatment.  Cases can be public/private institutions, civic/ professional organizations, local groups or communities, people, programs, events, behavioral conditions, actions/ decisions, work processes, and so forth. |
| Narrative | Stories are told by the participants to the researcher with the intent of creating a unified narrative or story that describes or explains a life episode (from humanities). The purpose of the researcher is to have the participants share the story. The researcher asks follow-up; clarifying questions in order to fully explore the narrative. The researcher is not ‘interacting’ (re: sharing their own story. |
| Grounded Theory | A theory or model is developed to describe the phenomenon as a concept, process, interactions, components, or actions (from sociology). Studies done at GCU usually produce a model in the form of a graphic organizer to be used in practice but grounded in evidence. |

| **Criterion**  **\*(Score = 0, 1, 2, or 3)** | **Learner Score** | **Chair Score** | **Methodologist Score** | **Content Expert Score** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Research Design  (Typically one or two pages) | | | | |
| The learner identifies the research design for the study. The learner provides the rationale for selecting the research design supported by empirical and methodological references. |  |  |  | **X** |
| The learner justifies why the design was selected as the best approach to collect the needed data, as opposed to alternative designs. |  |  |  | **X** |
| The learner uses authoritative source(s) to justify the design. ***Note*:** *Do not use introductory research textbooks (such as Creswell) to justify the research design and data analysis approach.* |  |  |  | **X** |
| The learner writes this section in a way that is well structured, has a logical flow, uses correct paragraph structure, sentence structure, punctuation, and APA format. |  |  |  | **X** |
| **\*Score each requirement listed in the criteria table using the following scale:**  0 = Item Not Present or Unacceptable. Substantial Revisions are Required.  1 = Item is Present. Does Not Meet Expectations. Revisions are Required.  2 = Item is Acceptable. Meets Expectations. Some Revisions May be Suggested or Required.  3 = Item Exceeds Expectations. No Revisions are Required. | | | | |
| **Reviewer Comments:** | | | | |

## Population and Sample Selection

In this section the learner summarizes the study setting (e.g., location), the population of interest (general population), target population, sampling strategy, sample size range, and sample. Learners should identify each of these explicitly within this section. The learner must use sampling terminology to identify the specific type of sampling to be used for the study. Qualitative research involves a nonprobability sampling approach, such as convenience sampling, purposeful (or purposive) sampling, and volunteer sampling. There are many others depending on the study design; as such, it is necessary to describe the sampling approach in detail. lopesup

### ***Study Sample and Sampling Strategy***

This section provides a summary of the general and target populations, study sample and size, then specifically describes and justifies the study sample in terms of size, sampling strategy, and inclusion and exclusion criteria for study participants. Please note, sample sizes in qualitative research are smaller than those in quantitative research. **Appendix K specifies requirements for sample size and adequacy of data for several qualitative research designs.** GCU has provided guidelines regarding sample size for each of the core designs, which are based on the traditions of design and analysis in qualitative research (Grand Canyon University, 2015, 2016, 2017a, 2017b, 2020). See Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006), and Mason (2010) for two examples that discuss the sufficiency of sample size in qualitative research.

### ***Recruiting Plan and Site Authorization***

Include a detailed description of the recruiting plan for the study. Your recruiting plan should reflect the sampling strategy. Part of the recruiting approach is the discussion of obtaining site authorization (Appendix B) in order to access the target population. Include relevant information, such as confidentiality measures, geographic specifics, and participant requirements. Provide a rationale for the recruiting plan and procedures.

Please note: The learner needs to present a detailed primary recruiting plan “A” for obtaining a sufficient sample size. The learner also needs to provide a secondary, detailed plan “B” and tertiary, detailed plan “C” as backup for obtaining a sufficient sample size if the primary Plan A does not work. The learner can then provide all three plans in the IRB application. This means if Plan “A” does not work, the learner will not need to file an amendment with IRB. If the learner has not obtained an adequate sample size after going through all three recruiting plans, the learner can move forward with data analysis and will include a discussion in Chapters 4 and 5 addressing why the proposed sample size was not achieved. lopesup

| **Criterion**  **\*(Score = 0, 1, 2, or 3)** | **Learner Score** | **Chair Score** | **Methodologist Score** | **Content Expert Score** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Population and Sample Selection  (Typically one or two pages) | | | | |
| The learner defines and describes the *population of interest* (the group to which the results of the study would be generalized or applicable) (such as police officers in AZ).  The learner defines and describes the *target population* from which the sample ultimately is selected (such as number of police officers in AZ who belong to the police fraternal association).  The learner defines and describes the *study sample*, who are the individuals who will volunteer or be selected from the target population and are the final source of data, and the final group from whom complete data will be collected.  **NOTE: There is no such thing as a sample population, there is only a “sample” that is taken from the target population of the population.** |  |  |  | **X** |
| The learner describes the required sample size to secure adequate qualitative data as based on the literature related to the design indicated in the previous section and provides the rationale for how this size was derived. |  |  |  | **X** |
| The learner defines and describes the sampling procedures (such as convenience, purposive, snowball, etc.) supported by scholarly research sources.  For a purposive sample, the learner identifies the screening criteria (“purposes”) and how the participants will be screened (e.g., demographic questionnaire, expert knowledge of topic, screening questions such as years of experience in a position).  The learner defines and describes the sampling strategy and the process for recruiting individuals to comprise the sample. **The learner provides a compelling argument that the target population is large enough to meet the target sample size by defining the “sample frame” (the subset of the target population from which the sample will be drawn).** |  |  |  | **X** |
| The learner discusses the primary plan to obtain the sample (plan “A”) as well as two back up plans to use if plan “A” does not provide the minimum target sample size. |  |  |  | **X** |
| The learner describes the process used to obtain site authorization to access the target population and study sample. This includes the information required to obtain this authorization, such as a description of confidentiality measures, the limits of study participation requirements, and geographic specifics, for example.  The learner includes evidence of site authorization in Appendix B prior to submission for peer review.  If public data sources or social media are used to collect data, and no site permission is required, the learner provides a rationale and evidence for why these sources can be used without this permission. |  |  |  | **X** |
| The learner writes this section in a way that is well structured, has a logical flow, uses correct paragraph structure, sentence structure, punctuation, and APA format. |  |  |  | **X** |
| **\*Score each requirement listed in the criteria table using the following scale:**  0 = Item Not Present or Unacceptable. Substantial Revisions are Required.  1 = Item is Present. Does Not Meet Expectations. Revisions are Required.  2 = Item is Acceptable. Meets Expectations. Some Revisions May be Suggested or Required.  3 = Item Exceeds Expectations. No Revisions are Required. | | | | |
| **Reviewer Comments:** | | | | |

## Sources of Data

In this section the learner fully identifies and describes the types of data that will be collected, as well as the specific research materials, instruments, and sources used to obtain or collect those data (interviews, questionnaires, media, documents, focus groups, observations, etc.). The learner will use the term *research data* to refer to data that will be collected specifically to address the research questions. Data used for screening/selection purposes, or demographic data, should be referred to as *additional data*. The learner will discuss the specific research materials, instruments, or sources used to collect data for the proposed study. The learner will include a brief introductory paragraph and then use the following section organization: lopesup

### ***Research Data***

Sources of qualitative data, such as interview protocols, are usually developed by the researcher. This differs considerably from quantitative data since the purpose of a qualitative study is to achieve depth of understanding of a particular situation and context to understand meaning and specific social attributes (organizational context, social relationships, roles, group patterns, and so on).

Research Data Source #1. The learner describes the first research data source in detail, including the phenomena for which it will provide data.

Research Data Source #2. The learner describes the second research data source in detail, including the phenomena for which it will provide data, and so forth.

For an interview protocol, the learner should develop interview questions that are consistent with the design. For example, for a phenomenological design, interview questions should be highly open-ended to elicit lived experiences in terms of feelings, thoughts, and reflections. If learners are using a previously published measurement instrument, they should discuss the characteristics of the instrument in detail and why it is suitable to gather data applicable to a qualitative study. For example, for a survey tool describe how the instrument or data source was developed and constructed. Learners planning to include previously published instruments must also obtain all appropriate use permissions from instrument authors. A copy of all “permissions to use” and all instruments must be included in separate appendices (one for each instrument-permission pair). For qualitative studies, learners often revise existing instruments, so the “permissions to use” must also include “permission to revise” as well.

If research data will come from an electronic database (*archival,* or *secondary* data), the learner must identify the database and indicate exactly how the data will be obtained or accessed and how it applies to the qualitative study. The learner must confirm that the database actually contains data that are needed to address the research questions. The learner must identify the source of the data (e.g., agency, website, etc.), and indicate how the data will physically be obtained and in what format. An outline of the structure of the database should be in an appendix, e.g., labels for the rows and columns. If permission to use the database is required, evidence of this permission also should be included in the same appendix. lopesup

### ***Additional Data***

The learner states the additional data to be collected, such as demographic data.

Additional Data Source #1. The learner describes the first additional data source in detail.

Additional Data Source #2. The learner describes the second additional data source in detail, and so forth.

Additional data includes, for example, information used for sample screening and/or selection purposes, *and demographic data*. For screening/selection instruments, the learner should explain how the instruments work, and exactly how the information obtained relates to participant selection. Additionally, a rationale should be provided for collection of demographic data. Use of additional demographic data should be primarily to provide a profile of the sample, and the specific demographic information collected must be relevant to the proposal topic. Due to new data privacy laws, collection of personally identifiable information (PII) is restricted. All demographic information to be collected will need to be clearly stated in the Informed Consent documents so participants are aware of the personal information they are being asked to provide as a study participant. Merely collecting demographic data to “have it” will not be approved. Note: For qualitative studies, learners may create the demographic form. lopesup

| **Criterion**  \***(Score = 0, 1, 2, or 3)** | **Learner Score** | **Chair Score** | **Methodologist Score** | **Content Expert Score** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Sources of Data  (Typically one to three pages) | | | | |
| The learner provides a detailed discussion of the sources to be used to collect the *research data* that will be used to address the research questions. The required details include:   1. How the instrument was developed and constructed. 2. Interview questions must be aligned with the research design and collect the information to address the research questions and problem statement. |  |  |  | **X** |
| If the learner’s research data will come from an electronic database (archival, or secondary data), they provide the following information:   1. Identify the database and indicate exactly how the data will be obtained or accessed. 2. Confirm that the database actually contains data on the phenomenon or case that are needed to address the research questions. 3. Identify the source of the data (e.g., agency, website, etc.), and indicate how the data will physically be obtained and in what format.   The learner includes an outline of the structure of the database in Appendix E, e.g., labels for the rows and columns.  If permission to use the database is required, evidence of this permission also is included in Appendix E. |  |  |  | **X** |
| The learner provides a detailed discussion of the instrumentation and/or research materials to be used to collect any *additional data*, such as data to be used for participant screening/selection and/or demographic data.  For screening/selection instruments, the learner explains how the instruments work, and exactly how the information obtained relates to participant selection.  For demographic data, the learner describes why it is necessary and how it will be used. The main use of demographic data is to provide a profile of the sample, and the specific demographic information collected will be relevant to the proposal topic. |  |  |  | **X** |
| The learner includes a copy of all instruments, questionnaires, surveys, interview protocols, observation protocols, focus group protocols, or other research materials in Appendix E. For any instruments or research materials that require “permission to use,” Appendix E includes evidence of having obtained such permission. A protocol for data collection such as an interview or focus group or observation is more than a set of interview questions, It should provide the detailed process the learner will use to collect the data including their introduction and description of the process, the location, the physical set-up, the technologies to be used for holding and recording the meeting, the interview questions, additional probing questions, and/or facilitation and data collection techniques used in these approaches. A detailed protocol enhances the learner’s ability to defend the study. |  |  |  | **X** |
| The learner writes this section in a way that is well structured, has a logical flow, uses correct paragraph structure, sentence structure, punctuation, and APA format. |  |  |  | **X** |
| **\*Score each requirement listed in the criteria table using the following scale:**  0 = Item Not Present or Unacceptable. Substantial Revisions are Required.  1 = Item is Present. Does Not Meet Expectations. Revisions are Required.  2 = Item is Acceptable. Meets Expectations. Some Revisions May be Suggested or Required.  3 = Item Exceeds Expectations. No Revisions are Required. | | | | |
| **Reviewer Comments:** | | | | |

## Trustworthiness

This section describes the four key elements that together serve to produce confidence in the research procedures and results of a qualitative study. These elements constitute the overarching concept of “trustworthiness.” The four elements are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. *Credibility and transferability are the qualitative version of validity, and dependability and confirmability are the qualitative version of reliability (see Appendix I.)*

Learners can start this discussion by (1) defining the concept (e.g., credibility), (2) identifying the “threats” (biases or weaknesses) inherent in their methodology (design, sampling, data collection procedures and sources of data/instruments, and data analysis), and (3) describing how they will minimize such threats (e.g., reflexivity for subjective bias in qualitative data analysis). The following are steps taken by a qualitative researcher to ensure the research is trustworthy, and are from Shenton (2004, p. 73), based on Guba’s (1981) four criteria for trustworthiness. *The researcher should address as many as are applicable to the design selected.* lopesup

### ***Credibility***

Credibility refers to how well the study’s findings accurately represent the experiences of participants for the sample under study. In other words, credibility describes the internal validity of the study. Some strategies qualitative researchers use to ensure credibility include:

* *Adoption* of a well-established data collection plan.
* *Fundamental knowledge of naturalistic inquiry*, which is the essence of naturalistic inquiry is that research is conducted in natural settings, that is, in settings where the participants live or engage in activities that are relevant to the phenomenon under study. (Armstrong, 2010; Lincoln & Guba, 1985)
* *Deep engagement*, which means sufficient time is given to listen, document, and achieve saturation of data.
* *Member checking*, which increases the authenticity of the final transcript.
* *Narrative truth*, which means the researcher represents the authenticity of participants’ reflections, comments, stories, and perspectives.
* *Negative cases and rival explanations*, which include evidence that does not fit the pattern that emerges during analysis and provides an explanation.
* *Researcher reflexivity*, which is how the researcher maintain awareness about how results unfold, documenting emerging patterns. The researcher’s positionality or “reflective commentary:” allows researcher to clearly state the lens through which the social world is interpreted and discuss how the researcher’s background influences data collection and analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).
* *Thick description,* which isthe context(s) of the participants be described in a rich and detailed manner.
* *Triangulation* via use of different data collection methods, different informants, different locations
* *Researcher experience*, which includes a description of background, qualifications, and experience of the researcher (researcher positionality) lopesup

### ***Dependability***

Dependability refers to the degree to which research procedures are documented and are reliable. Techniques used to demonstrate dependability include:

* *Audit trail*, which is documentation of the inquiry process.
* *Evidence,* which includes full transcripts, careful documentation of data gathering sessions, media (audiotapes, videotapes, documents, photographs), employment of “overlapping methods.”
* *An in-depth methodological description* that provides a comprehensible record of how data were collected and analyzed. Meticulous description increases soundness of study that can be useful for future studies.
* *Records of the data analysis process*, which includes codebooks, how coding schemes were developed, documentation of initial codes secondary codes, categories, with multiple examples from the dataset (interview transcripts, observational records, focus group transcripts, for example).
* *Clear alignment* of what needs to be understood, problem statement, research questions, methodology, research design.
* *Peer debriefing*, which includes consulting with mentors or experienced qualitative researchers to discuss and receive feedback on the study, prior to, during, and after the completion of the study.
* *Test the strength of the analysis and interpretation*, which includes checking analysis and interpretation against documents, records, recordings (the dataset). lopesup

### ***Transferability***

Transferability refers to the degree to which findings are applicable to policy, practice, and future research, or the degree to which the results of a qualitative study apply to other people or contexts. Transferabilit**y** addresses the external validity and is the qualitative version of “generalizability” of the study’s results.

* *Thick description* that provides background data to establish context of study and detailed description of phenomenon in question to allow comparisons of the context can be made to other contexts. The greater the detailed description of the phenomena, the more meaningful the results may be when informing another context.to be made.
* *Sampling sufficiency*, which refers both to the sample size and to the appropriateness of the sample, so that the participants experience the phenomena so that the data collected from them provide insight into the phenomena. lopesup

### ***Confirmability***

Confirmability refers to the objectivity or the ability of others to confirm or corroborate findings (Chess, 2017, section 3, para. 3). Qualitative researchers develop confirmability through:

* *Coding,* which is clear and well defined; the naming of patterns identified in the data; patterns can include stories, ideas, specific participant-offered terms, and phrases.
* *Providing ample evidence* to support claims.
* *Intercoder reliability*. The extent to which two researchers, coding data based on the same codebook (an inductively developed list of codes and their definitions) code the data in the same way.
* *Rival explanations and negative cases*. Identify examples that do not fit a pattern that is emerging. These might indicate an alternative organizing scheme, or may be the exception that proves the rule (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Patton, 1999)
* *Researcher reflexivity*, which is how the researcher maintain awareness about how results unfold, documenting emerging patterns. The researcher’s positionality or “reflective commentary:” allows researcher to clearly state the lens through which the social world is interpreted and discuss how the researcher’s background influences data collection and analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).
* *In-depth methodological description* to allow integrity of research results to be scrutinized.
* *Admission or statement of researcher’s beliefs and assumptions*.
* *Recognition of shortcomings in study’s methods and their potential effects.* lopesup

| **Criterion**  \***(Score = 0, 1, 2, or 3)** | **Learner Score** | **Chair Score** | **Methodologist Score** | **Content Expert Score** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **TRUSTWORTHINESS**  (Typically two to four paragraphs or approximately one page) | | | | | |
| Defines the concepts of credibility, transferability  Credibility: discusses how the study represents the participants’ experiences  Transferability: discusses how the study’s findings may be applicable to policy, practice, future research |  |  |  | **X** |
| Describes the threats to the credibility and transferability of the study inherent in the study design, sampling strategy, data collection method/instruments, and data analysis  Addresses how these threats will be minimized |  |  |  | **X** |
| Defines concepts of dependability and confirmability |  |  |  | **X** |
| Dependability: discusses how the study documents research procedures. Provides detailed research protocols. |  |  |  | **X** |
| Confirmability: discusses how the study could be confirmed or findings corroborated by others. |  |  |  | **X** |
| Describes the threats to dependability and confirmability of the study inherent in the study design, sampling strategy, data collection method/instruments, and data analysis.  Addresses how these threats will be minimized. |  |  |  | **X** |
| Appendices must include copies of instruments, materials, qualitative data collection protocols, codebook(s), and permission letters from instrument authors (for validated instruments, surveys, interview guides, etc.) |  |  |  | **X** |
| Section is written in a way that is well structured, has a logical flow, uses correct paragraph structure, sentence structure, correct punctuation, and APA format. |  |  |  | **X** |
| **\*Score each requirement listed in the criteria table using the following scale:**  0 = Item Not Present or Unacceptable. Substantial Revisions are Required.  1 = Item is Present. Does Not Meet Expectations. Revisions are Required.  2 = Item is Acceptable. Meets Expectations. Some Revisions May be Suggested or Required.  3 = Item Exceeds Expectations. No Revisions are Required. | | | | | |
| **Reviewer Comments:** | | | | | |

## Data Collection and Management

The learner will use this section to describe in detail the entirety of the process that will be used to collect the data. “The data” includes both *research* and *additional* data (see Sources of Data and/or Research Materials). This includes describing the basic, step-by-step procedures used to carry out all the major steps for data collection for the study *at a level of detail that would allow another researcher to execute the study.* The learner should view this section as similar to a “recipe,” that needs to be carefully followed to produce the best possible study results (the “entrée”). It is critical for the learner to ensure that this section is clear, comprehensive, and details the *exact* steps to be used in the data collection process. Detail is critical! This section needs to have sufficiently detailed steps so that another researcher could collect data following those steps.

It also is important that the learner describes the method(s) of collecting data using protocols and instruments. For example, it might be that all data be collected within a single face-to-face or videoconferencing setting. Alternatively, the researcher might meet with the learner in one data collection session and ask the participant to complete a different instrument in a *separate* session for some reason*.* For the latter situation, the learner must describe the process by which data from all sources will be linked to a specific participant. lopesup

| **Criterion**  \***(Score = 0, 1, 2, or 3)** | **Learner Score** | **Chair Score** | **Methodologist Score** | **Content Expert Score** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Data Collection and Management  (Typically one to three pages) | | | | |
| The learner describes the procedures for the actual data collection at a level of detail that would allow execution of the study by another researcher. This will include (but not be limited to) how each instrument, measurement technique, or data source will be used, how and where data will be collected, and how data will be recorded.  The learner includes a sequence of actions or step-by-step procedures to be used to carry out all the major steps for data collection. This includes a workflow and corresponding timeline, presenting a logical, sequential, and transparent protocol for data collection that would allow another researcher to conduct the study.  Data from different sources may have to be collected in parallel (e.g., paper-and-pen surveys for teachers, corresponding students, and their parents AND retrieval of archival data from the school district). Provides detailed description of data collection process, including all sources of data, such as interviews, observations, surveys; and methods used such as field tests, expert panel review, and member checking. Note: The collected data must be sufficient in breadth and depth to answer the research question(s) and interpreted and presented correctly, by theme, research question and/or instrument. |  |  |  | **X** |
| The steps include acquisition of site authorization documents, IRB approval, and the procedures for obtaining participant informed consent and protecting the rights and well-being of the participants.  The learner includes copies of the relevant site authorizations, participant informed consent forms, recruitment announcements/materials (e.g., posters, e-mails, etc.) in appropriate appendices. |  |  |  | **X** |
| The learner describes the data management procedures for paper-based and/or electronic data. This includes, for example, data security procedures and how and when data will be destroyed. |  |  |  | **X** |
| The learner writes this section in a way that is well structured, has a logical flow, uses correct paragraph structure, sentence structure, punctuation, and APA format. |  |  |  | **X** |
| **\*Score each requirement listed in the criteria table using the following scale:**  0 = Item Not Present or Unacceptable. Substantial Revisions are Required.  1 = Item is Present. Does Not Meet Expectations. Revisions are Required.  2 = Item is Acceptable. Meets Expectations. Some Revisions May be Suggested or Required.  3 = Item Exceeds Expectations. No Revisions are Required. | | | | |
| **Reviewer Comments:** | | | | |

## Data Analysis Procedures

The learner uses this section to identify and provide a rationale for the data analysis approach for the study, and to provide a step-by-step description of the procedures to be used to conduct the analysis. The key elements of this section include:

* Description of analytic approach that should clearly connect to the problem and research questions. Learners might provide the discussion in a narrative way to show the connection between varying types of analysis and each research question, particularly if different techniques are needed for each question.
* The process by which the raw data will be prepared for analysis.
* If descriptive statistics are used, the language used to describe them will be reported for all *research* and *additional* data analysis procedure.
* A rationale for and choice of an analytic approach for addressing each of the research questions.
* A description of the analytic approach (for example: for thematic analysis, describe all steps in coding, how codes were developed, provide tables showing both initial and secondary coding cycles, show development of codes into themes, provide examples of every code, pertinent clusters of codes, and relationship of those to themes, provide multiple examples from transcript to illustrate codes, code clusters, and themes. Note that some designs, such as phenomenology and narrative analysis, follow a distinctive analytic approach unlike thematic analysis. These approaches must be supported by citations.
* For thematic analysis, include codebook for those analyses in which coding is conducted. The codebook should include in each row: the code, a definition of the code, examples of the code from transcripts, and other sources of data.
* Provide ample description of the data, including:
* Interviews: how the interview questions were developed. If based on literature or existing data source(s), include citations and permissions to use and revise in the appendix. Once reviewed by expert panel or field tested, include initial and revised versions of interview questions in the appendix before peer review submission; revisions would be based on outcomes from field testing or expert panel review. For additional information on field testing and expert panel review see the DC Network>Dissertation Home Page>Dissertation Resources.
* Questionnaires: how the questions were developed. If using (and revising) existing questionnaire, include citations and permissions to use and revise in the appendix.
* Focus group: identify and describe the type of focus group to be used. Describe how the questions or activities were developed, the way(s) in which the focus group(s) will assist in answering research questions, and how the purpose of the focus group(s) differs from that of the interviews.
* Observations: information on how the observation(s) will assist in answering the research questions. Observation protocol must be included in the appendix and should relate to the overall research protocol. Identify the observation form(s) that will be used as a part of the protocol to record the observation data. Observations are not for the purpose of noting participant body language, facial expressions, or other reactions that do not relate to addressing the Problem Space. The data from the observation must address the research questions. lopesup

| **Criterion**  \***(Score = 0, 1, 2, or 3)** | **Learner Score** | **Chair Score** | **Methodologist Score** | **Content Expert Score** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Data Analysis Procedures  (Typically one to three pages) | | | | |
| The learner restates the problem statement or purpose statement, along with the research question(s) |  |  |  | **X** |
| Describes how raw data are prepared for analysis (i.e., transcribing interviews, conducting member checking, how all sources of data will be organized. and checking for missing data).  Describes (for both paper-based and electronic data) the data management procedures adopted to maintain data securely, including the length of time data will be kept, where it will be kept, and how it will be destroyed |  |  |  | **X** |
| Describe evidence of qualitative analysis approach, such as coding and theming process, which must be completely described and include the analysis /interpretation process. Clear evidence from how codes were combined or synthesized to create the themes must be presented. |  |  |  | **X** |
| Provides support that the proposed quantity and quality of data are expected to be sufficient to answer the research questions. |  |  |  | **X** |
| The learner provides description of how the results will be reported. |  |  |  | **X** |
| The learner writes this section in a way that is well structured, has a logical flow, uses correct paragraph structure, sentence structure, punctuation, and APA format. |  |  |  | **X** |
| **\*Score each requirement listed in the criteria table using the following scale:**  0 = Item Not Present or Unacceptable. Substantial Revisions are Required.  1 = Item is Present. Does Not Meet Expectations. Revisions are Required.  2 = Item is Acceptable. Meets Expectations. Some Revisions May be Suggested or Required.  3 = Item Exceeds Expectations. No Revisions are Required. | | | | |
| **Reviewer Comments:** | | | | |

## Ethical Considerations

In this section the learner demonstrates adherence to the key principles of the Belmont Report (respect, justice, and beneficence) in the study design, sampling procedures, the research problem, and the research questions. The learners discuss very clearly how data will be stored, safeguarded, and destroyed. Learners are required to securely maintain and have access to raw data/records for a minimum of three years.

If asked by committee chair/members, IRB, peer reviewer, or CDS representative, learner must provide all evidence of collected data including raw survey or source data, Excel files, interview/focus group recordings and transcripts, evidence of coding or data analysis, or survey results, etc. As such, the learners Informed Consent document must state that the dissertation chair, committee members, and College of Doctoral Studies reviewers may be able access to all study data. No dissertation will be allowed to move forward in the review process if data are not produced upon request. In this section, the learner also references IRB approval to conduct the research is required to conduct their research, which includes subject recruiting, the informed consent process, and the voluntary nature of study.

The learner also identifies all the potential risks for harm to participants that may be inherent in the study. For example, some types of testing may stimulate feelings of fear, anger, and/or depression. The learner anticipates this possibility and indicates how this will be addressed. The learner makes a clear distinction between whether participation and participant data will be *confidential* or *anonymous*. This distinction will be needed for IRB approval. Refer to the DC Network>IRB Research Center for IRB resources, templates, video instructions, and IRB webinars on preparing your IRB application materials. lopesup

**Figure 3**  
  
*IRB Alert*

**IRB Alert**

**Please be aware that GCU doctoral learners may not screen, recruit, or collect any data until they receive Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval and obtain a signed D-50 form. IRB review occurs after the proposal is approved by peer review and the proposal defense is completed. Learners are responsible for knowing, understanding, and following the IRB submission and review processes. Screening, recruiting participants, and collecting data in advance of IRB approval is a serious research ethical violation, with legal and federal regulatory implications to the University. If a learner chooses to screen, recruit study participants, or collect data in advance of obtaining IRB approval (IRB approval letter and D-50 form), they will be subject to serious academic disciplinary action by the Institutional Review Board and Code of Conduct committee. This may include collecting new data or requiring the learner to start over with a new research study. In addition, the Code of Conduct committee will issue a disciplinary action that may include warning, suspension, or dismissal from the program.**

**NOTE: Learners should NEVER proceed with any aspect of participant screening, recruiting, interacting with participants, or collecting data in advance of receiving the IRB approval letter and the D-50 form. The chairs and committee members are trained on these requirements; however, the learner is ultimately responsible for understanding and adhering to all IRB requirements as outlined in the University Policy Handbook and Dissertation Milestone Guide.**

**NOTE: The minimum progression milestone for IRB approval is in dissertation course 970E. Refer to Appendix L Minimum Progression Milestone Table and the most recent Dissertation Milestone Guide for additional details. Dissertation course 970E is the absolute latest course for IRB approval. Learners are highly encouraged to work ahead and gain IRB approval in earlier dissertation courses.**

lopesup

| **Criterion**  \***(Score = 0, 1, 2, or 3)** | **Learner Score** | **Chair Score** | **Methodologist Score** | **Content Expert Score** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**  (Typically three to four paragraphs or approximately one page) | | | | |
| Provides a discussion of ethical issues, per Belmont Report and IRB guidelines, related to the study and the study population of interest. Includes citations.  Explains which principles / issues are relevant to the study.  Identifies the potential risks for harm that are inherent in the study and describes how they will be avoided and/or mitigated. |  |  |  | **X** |
| Describes the procedures for obtaining informed consent and for protecting the rights and well-being of the study participants. Includes statement in Informed Consent on who has data access including chair, committee members, IRB and peer reviewers, college representative. |  |  |  | **X** |
| Addresses key ethical criteria of anonymity, confidentiality, privacy, strategies to prevent coercion, and any potential conflict of interest. |  |  |  | **X** |
| Describes the data management procedures adopted to store and maintain paper and electronic data securely, including the minimum 3-year length of time data will be kept, where it will be kept, and how it will be destroyed.  Explains plan(s) to implement each of the principles/issues that are relevant to the study, data management, data analysis, and publication of findings.  **Note:** Learners are required to securely maintain and have access to raw data/records for a minimum of three years. If asked by a committee member, IRB reviewer, peer reviewer or CDS representative, learner must provide all evidence of data including source data, Excel files, interview recordings and transcripts, evidence of coding or data analysis, or survey results, etc. No dissertation will be allowed to move forward in the review process if data are not produced upon request. |  |  |  | **X** |
| Includes copy of site authorization letter (if appropriate), IRB Informed Consent (Proposal), and IRB Approval letter (Dissertation) in appropriate Appendices.  All approvals, consent forms, recruitment, and data collection materials are mentioned in the Data Collection section and included in appropriate appendices (with appropriate in-text references). |  |  |  | **X** |
| Section is written in a way that is well structured, has a logical flow, uses correct paragraph structure, sentence structure, punctuation, and APA format. |  |  |  | **X** |
| **\*Score each requirement listed in the criteria table using the following scale:**  0 = Item Not Present or Unacceptable. Substantial Revisions are Required.  1 = Item is Present. Does Not Meet Expectations. Revisions are Required.  2 = Item is Acceptable. Meets Expectations. Some Revisions May be Suggested or Required.  3 = Item Exceeds Expectations. No Revisions are Required. | | | | |
| **Reviewer Comments:** | | | | |

## Assumptions and Delimitations

This section identifies the assumptions and specifies the delimitations of the study. The learner should define the terms using citations from the literature, and then list the assumptions and delimitations. The learner should provide a rationale and appropriate citations for all statements.

### ***Assumptions***

An assumption is a self-evident truth. This section lists what is assumed to be true about the information gathered in the study. State the assumptions being accepted for the study which may be methodological, theoretical, or topic specific. Provide a rationale for each assumption. Additionally, identify any potential negative consequences of the assumptions for the study. For example, the following assumptions were present in this study:

* It is assumed that survey participants in this study were not deceptive with their interview answers, and that the participants answered questions honestly and to the best of their ability. Provide an explanation to support this assumption.
* It is assumed that this study is an accurate representation of the current (health, economic, education) situation in rural southern Arizona. Provide an explanation to support this assumption. lopesup

### ***Delimitations***

Delimitations are decisions or choices made by the researcher (or stakeholders) to establish the boundaries (or limits) of the study (e.g., location and duration), which could affect the quality of the research. Identify the delimitations of the research. Provide a rationale for each delimitation and discuss associated consequences for the transferability and applicability of the findings. Address delimitations pertaining to different aspects or scope of the study. Note that “Limitations” due to challenges in the conduct of research should be described in Chapters 4 & 5.)

Examples of Delimitations. The following examples illustrate how learners can state delimitations present in their study.

1. Lack of funding delimited the scope of this study. Provide an explanation to support this delimitation.
2. The survey of high school students was delimited to only rural schools in one county within southern Arizona, limiting the demographic sample. Provide an explanation to support this delimitation.
3. Case study design was delimited to one single case instead of multiple cases for comparison.
4. Data collection methods were delimited to interviews, questionnaires, and archival document reviews, excluding classroom observations due to school policy. lopesup

| **Criterion**  **\*(Score = 0, 1, 2, or 3)** | **Learner Score** | **Chair Score** | **Methodologist Score** | **Content Expert Score** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Assumptions and Delimitations  (Typically three to four paragraphs) | | | | |
| The learner provides a separate subsection for assumptions and delimitations. |  |  |  | **X** |
| The learner states the assumptions being accepted for the study and provides a rationale for making each assumption.  The learner also discusses associated consequences for the transferability and applicability of the findings. |  |  |  | **X** |
| The learner identifies the methodological delimitations of the study and provides a rationale for each delimitation.  The learner discusses associated consequences for the transferability and applicability of the findings. |  |  |  | **X** |
| The learner discusses strategies to minimize and/or mitigate the potential negative consequences of methodological assumptions and delimitations. |  |  |  | **X** |
| The learner writes this section in a way that is well structured, has a logical flow, uses correct paragraph structure, sentence structure, punctuation, and APA format. |  |  |  | **X** |
| **\*Score each requirement listed in the criteria table using the following scale:**  0 = Item Not Present or Unacceptable. Substantial Revisions are Required.  1 = Item is Present. Does Not Meet Expectations. Revisions are Required.  2 = Item is Acceptable. Meets Expectations. Some Revisions May be Suggested or Required.  3 = Item Exceeds Expectations. No Revisions are Required. | | | | |
| **Reviewer Comments:** | | | | |

## Summary

In this section the learner summarizes the key points Chapter 3. The learner demonstrates an in-depth understanding of the overall research design and analysis techniques. The learner concludes the Chapter 3 summary with a discussion that transitions the reader to Chapter 4.

**Important Note: the minimum progression milestone for completing the full proposal (Chapters 1,2 and 3), approved by all committee members, and successfully submitted and accepted to Level 2 Peer review is dissertation course 968E. Refer to Appendix L Minimum Progression Milestone Table and the most recent Dissertation Milestone Guide for additional details. Dissertation course 968E is the absolute latest course for proposal submission and acceptance into Level 2 peer review. Learners are highly encouraged to work ahead and submit to Level 2 peer review in earlier dissertation courses with committee approval.** lopesup

| **Criterion**  \***(Score = 0, 1, 2, or 3)** | **Learner Score** | **Chair Score** | **Methodologist Score** | **Content Expert Score** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Chapter 3 Summary  (Typically one to two pages) | | | | |
| The learner summarizes key points presented in Chapter 3 using authoritative, empirical sources/citations. Key points include (for example):   * Methodology/design * Population * Sample size/selection * Instrumentation/Sources of Data * Data collection * Data analysis |  |  |  | **X** |
| The learner concludes Chapter 3 with a transition discussion to focus for Chapter 4. |  |  |  | **X** |
| The learner writes this section in a way that is well structured, has a logical flow, uses correct paragraph structure, sentence structure, punctuation, and APA format. |  |  |  | **X** |
| **\*Score each requirement listed in the criteria table using the following scale:**  0 = Item Not Present or Unacceptable. Substantial Revisions are Required.  1 = Item is Present. Does Not Meet Expectations. Revisions are Required.  2 = Item is Acceptable. Meets Expectations. Some Revisions May be Suggested or Required.  3 = Item Exceeds Expectations. No Revisions are Required. | | | | |
| **Reviewer Comments:** | | | | |

# Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Results

## Introduction

**The minimum progression milestone for draft of Chapter 4 “Acceptance” by chair and submission to methodologist is in dissertation course 971E. Refer to Appendix L Minimum Progression Milestone Table and the most recent Dissertation Milestone Guide for additional details. Dissertation course 971E is the absolute latest course for Chapter 4 acceptance by chair and submission to methodologist. Learners are highly encouraged to work ahead and submit Chapter 4 in earlier dissertation courses.**

The purpose of this chapter is to provide the reader with a concise summary of the study and a presentation of the results. In this section of Chapter 4, the learner should briefly restate the research problem, the methodology and design, the research question(s), and phenomena, and then offer a statement about what will be covered in this chapter. Chapter 4 should present the results of the study as clearly as possible, leaving the interpretation of the results for Chapter 5. Make sure this chapter is written in past tense and reflects how the study was *actually conducted*. Any change to the sampling approach, instrumentation, data collection procedures or data analysis must be noted in this chapter. **After the research study is complete, make sure this chapter reflects how the study was actually conducted in comparison to what was proposed in Chapter 3. These changes should also be discussed as limitations of the study (in appropriate sections of Chapters 4 and 5).**

This chapter typically contains the analyzed data, often presented in both text and tabular, or figure format. To ensure readability and clarity of findings, structure is of the utmost importance in this chapter. Sufficient guidance in the narrative should be provided to highlight the findings of greatest importance for the reader. Most researchers begin with a description of the sample and the relevant demographic characteristics presented in text or tabular format. Ask the following general questions before starting this chapter:

1. Is there sufficient data to answer each of the research question(s) asked in the study?
2. Is there sufficient data to support the conclusions made in Chapter 5?
3. Is the study written in the third person? Never use the first person.
4. Are the data clearly explained using a table, graph, chart, or text?
5. Visual organizers, including tables and figures, must always be introduced, presented and discussed within the text first. Never insert them without these three steps. It is often best to develop all the tables, graphs, charts, etc. before writing any text to further clarify how to proceed. Point out the salient results and present those results by table, graph, chart, or other form of collected data. lopesup

### **Important Changes and Updates to Information in Chapters 1-3**

In this required section, the learner discusses changes made to the original research plan presented in Chapters 1-3. Furthermore, learner discusses implications of these changes, including changes to the sample, data collection, design, data analysis, etc. For example, if target sample size was not achieved using plans “A”, “B”, and “C”, the learner must address the ramifications on the breadth and depth of the analyses, and study findings. Based on peer review and/or committee recommendations, the learner may choose to update Chapters 1-3 to reflect what actually occurred OR clearly present the important changes that occurred between the original plan and what actually occurred in this section and also in the Study Limitations section of Chapter 4. Changes to the research plan must also be addressed in Chapter 5 under strengths and weaknesses section. lopesup

| **Criterion**  \***(Score = 0, 1, 2, or 3)** | **Learner Score** | **Chair Score** | **Methodologist Score** | **Content Expert Score** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **INTRODUCTION (TO THE CHAPTER)**  (Typically two to four paragraphs or approximately one page) | | | | |
| Provides a summary of the study including research problem, methodology, design, research questions and phenomena. |  |  |  | **X** |
| Provides an orienting statement about what will be covered in the chapter. |  |  |  | **X** |
| Learner discusses important changes between original plan presented in the proposal (Chapters 1-3) and what actually occurred.  Learner updated Chapters 1-3 to reflect what actually occurred OR clearly presents the important changes that occurred between the original plan and what actually occurred in this section and in the Study Limitations section of Chapter 4 |  |  |  | **X** |
| Section is written in a way that is well structured, has a logical flow, uses correct paragraph structure, sentence structure, punctuation, and APA format. |  |  |  | **X** |
| **\*Score each requirement listed in the criteria table using the following scale:**  0 = Item Not Present or Unacceptable. Substantial Revisions are Required.  1 = Item is Present. Does Not Meet Expectations. Revisions are Required.  2 = Item is Acceptable. Meets Expectations. Some Revisions May be Suggested or Required.  3 = Item Exceeds Expectations. No Revisions are Required. | | | | |
| **Reviewer Comments:** | | | | |

## Preparation of Raw Data for Analysis and Descriptive Data

### Preparation of Raw Data for Analysis

Within this subsection, the learner describes how all raw data were prepared for analysis. This should include transcription process, member checking, and any other preparation activities. Describe how data were prepared for uploading to MAXQDA or other qualitative software program, if relevant. For example:

* Define how to organize the data (some options: by participant, by source)
* Set up system for pseudonyms (create a table in separate document showing real names and associated pseudonym). We advise names (John, Mary), rather than numbers (P1, P2) in qualitative studies to maintain the sense of personhood and presence in a natural setting (not a lab), which is consistent with a qualitative approach
* Organize other sources of data (sociograms, photographs, images, copies of hand coded data, collected documents, etc.)
* Transcribe all interview and focus group data
* Send copies of transcripts to participants to “member check” (check that the transcript shows what they meant; they can add clarification if so desired)
* Upload raw data to MAXQDA or other qualitative software program (Note GCU provides MAXQDA to all learners at no cost)
* Upload raw data to a new folder in the LDP (either create a new 07 Data folder or into a new folder in the existing 05 Folder). This is a requirement for L5 Peer Review. [NOTE: GCU faculty are required to maintain all confidentiality pledged by learner per the IRB approved/stamped Informed Consent].

Once the learner has prepared the data, the learner then provides a narrative summary (description per next section) of the population or sample characteristics and demographics of the participants in the study. lopesup

### Descriptive Data

This section describes the dataset that was produced from data collection activities. This should include the number of participants and corresponding descriptive information regarding the demographic data (such as gender, age, and ethnicity) and research data. It should also include tables showing each data collection method, which participants joined each, and pertinent information such as duration of interviews or focus groups, and number of pages of transcript, measured as complete single-spaced pages, Times New Roman 12 pt. font (see Table 3. Keep in mind that all descriptive or demographic information must pertain directly to the study and must be included in the informed consent for participants to understand what personal data is being collected about them. Ensure this data cannot lead to anyone identifying individual participants in this section or identifying the data for individual participants in the data summary and data analysis that follows. It is important that key demographic and descriptive data are provided. It is also acceptable to put most of this in the appendix if the chapter becomes too lengthy.

For numbers, equations, and statistics, spell out any number that begins a sentence, title, or heading – or reword the sentence to place the number later in the narrative. In general, use Arabic numerals (10, 11, 12) when referring to whole numbers 10 and above, and spell out whole numbers below 10. There are some exceptions to this rule:

* If small numbers are grouped with large numbers in a comparison, use numerals (e.g., 7, 8, 10, and 13 trials); but, do not do this when numbers are used for different purposes (e.g., 10 items on each of four surveys).
* Numbers in a measurement with units (e.g., 6 cm, 5-mg dose, 2%).
* Numbers that represent time, dates, ages, sample or population size, scores, or exact sums of money.
* Numbers that represent a specific item in a numbered series (e.g., Table 1).

A sample table in APA style is presented in all tables in this template, see, for example, Table 6. Be mindful that all tables fit within the required margins, and are clean, easy to read, and formatted properly using the guidelines found in Chapter 5 (Displaying Results) of the APA *Publication Manual* 7th edition (APA, 2019). lopesup

**Table 6**  
  
*Example of a Clean, Easy-to-Read Table*

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Participant | Setting | Interview | Duration | # Transcript Pages (Time New Roman, Font size 12, single spaced) |
| Participant 1 | Main office | Date | 65 minutes | 19 |
| Participant 2 | Zoom conference | Date | 72 minutes | 21 |
| Participant 3 | Zoom conference | Date | 50 minutes | 15 |
| *etc.* | … | … | … | … |
| MEAN | N/A | N/A | 62.3 minutes | 18.3 |
| TOTAL | N/A | N/A | 187 minutes | 55 |

**Table 7**  
  
*Example of Clean, Easy-to-Read Table for Focus Group Data*

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Participant | Group | Participation Length | Contributions | Initial Codes Produced |
| Participant 1 | Group 1 | 48 min. | 7 | 4 |
| Participant 2 | Group 1 | 48 min. | 5 | 2 |
| etc. | … | … | … | … |
| Participant 3 | Group 2 | 67 min. | 12 | 6 |
| Participant 4 | Group 2 | 67 min. | 9 | 5 |
| etc. | … | … | … | … |
| TOTAL | N/A | 115 minutes | 33 | 17 |

**Table 8**  
  
*Example of Case Unit Profiling (in Narrative)*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Case Unit | Case Description |
| Case Unit 1 | Comprised of state-funded community healthcare programs in rural counties of the southwestern United States that rely on both Medicaid and local non-profit service organizations for their delivery of care. Programs are overseen by either a chief medical officer or nurse-practitioner director, and have the following staff composition as reported by Smith, Smith, and Johnson (2016): 30% community case managers, 20% clinical case managers, 15% medical practitioners, 15% compliance officers, 10% enrollment specialists, and 10% administrative leadership. The annual budget for these programs was reported as $2.2 million from 2015 to 2018 (Williams & Janson, 2019). For this study, the participants identified by the pseudonyms of Michael, Sarah, Erika, and Jane all work for programs in Case Unit-1 |
| Case Unit-2 | Comprised of community healthcare programs in urban municipalities of the southwestern United States that rely on Medicaid and federal health programs for their delivery of care. These diverse public-funded programs are overseen jointly by a state-appointed health commissioner and a chief medical officer from the Medicaid division. Their staff composition was reported by Weston and Burke (2015) as being 40% nursing case manager, 20% compliance representative, 15% enrollment specialist, 15% behavioral health counselor, and 10% administrative staff. The annual budget for these programs was reported as 1.8 million from 2014 to 2018 (Weston & Burke, 2015). Study participants identified by the pseudonyms of Ellen, Robert, Thomas, Cassandra, and Jennifer all work for programs in Case Unit-2. |
| Case Unit 3 | Add narrative here regarding Case Unit 3 |

| **Criterion**  \***(Score = 0, 1, 2, or 3)** | **Learner Score** | **Chair Score** | **Methodologist Score** | **Content Expert Score** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **PREPARATION OF RAW DATA AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA**  (Number of pages as needed) | | | | |
| Describes how raw data were prepared for analysis. |  |  |  | **X** |
| Provides a narrative summary of the population or sample characteristics and demographics.  Presents the "sample (or population) profile," may use descriptive statistics for the demographics collected from or retrieved for the actual sample or population. |  |  |  | **X** |
| Includes a narrative summary of data collected (e.g., examples of collected data should be included in an Appendix.) |  |  |  | **X** |
| Uses visual graphic organizers, such as tables, histograms, graphs, and/or bar charts, to effectively organize and display coded data and descriptive data. For example:  Discuss and provide a table showing number of interviews conducted, duration of interviews, #pages transcript; #observations conducted, duration; #pages of typed-up field notes; # of occurrences of a code; network diagrams; model created, etc. |  |  |  | **X** |
| Section is written in a way that is well structured, has a logical flow, uses correct paragraph structure, sentence structure, punctuation, and APA format. |  |  |  | **X** |
| **\*Score each requirement listed in the criteria table using the following scale:**  0 = Item Not Present or Unacceptable. Substantial Revisions are Required.  1 = Item is Present. Does Not Meet Expectations. Revisions are Required.  2 = Item is Acceptable. Meets Expectations. Some Revisions May be Suggested or Required.  3 = Item Exceeds Expectations. No Revisions are Required. | | | | |
| **Reviewer Comments:** | | | | |

## Data Analysis Procedures

This section presents a description of the process that was used to analyze the data. Data analysis procedures can be framed relative to each research question. Data can also be organized by chronology of phenomena, by themes and patterns, or by other approaches as deemed appropriate by design and for a qualitative study. This section should specify the procedures that were specifically carried out to ensure the reader understands how the analytic process was conducted. lopesup

### Reflexivity Protocol

For learners who implemented some sort of reflexivity protocol (such as bracketing or peer debriefing) to track and manage biases, please be sure to clarify how this protocol fit sequentially with respect to the data analysis strategy. For instance, did you record and organize your bracketing notes before/after each data collection event – and hence before the data analysis process even began – or did you wait to record your bracketing notes before/after each cycle of analytic coding (tracking your bias during the conceptual development of codes, categories, and themes)? What was the logic for your approach? lopesup

### ***Data Analysis Steps***

Describe in detail the data analysis procedures. The analytic procedures must be aligned to the design; they are not generic. Start discussion of data analysis procedures by identifying and describing the analytical approach (e.g., thematic analysis, phenomenological analysis, narrative analysis). Describe analytic process. For example: for thematic analysis provide a description of how codes were developed, how clusters of codes or categories were developed, how these are related to themes. Provide examples of codes and themes with corresponding quotations, demonstrating how codes were synthesized or clustered or combined and developed into themes. For phenomenological analysis identify the specific type of phenomenological design and the specific data analysis approach used. That approach might involve providing transformation procedures, the transformation process, how phenomenological constituents were developed, how these are related to the general phenomenological structure of the experience. Provide examples of phenomenological constituents with corresponding quotations, demonstrating how constituents were discovered among phenomenological transformations. Provide evidence of analytic elements in text or an Appendix. Include graphic organizers to demonstrate analytic steps. lopesup

| **Criterion**  **\*(Score = 0, 1, 2, or 3)** | **Learner Score** | **Chair Score** | **Methodologist Score** | **Content Expert Score** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURES**  (Number of pages as needed) | | | | |
| Describes in detail the data analysis procedures.  Coding procedures must be tailored to the specific analytical approach; they are not generic.  Start discussion of data analysis procedures by identifying and describing the analytical approach (e.g., thematic analysis, type of phenomenological analysis).  Describes coding process, description of how codes were developed, how categories or clusters of codes were developed, how these are related to themes. Provide examples of codes and themes with corresponding quotations, demonstrating how codes were developed or synthesized into themes. Provides evidence of initial and final codes and themes in text or an Appendix.  Detail the specific kinds of analytic units appropriate to the design and analytic approach. |  |  |  | **X** |
| Explains and justifies any differences in why data analysis section does not match what was approved in Chapter 3 (if appropriate). |  |  |  | **X** |
| Discusses the reflexivity protocols used (such as bracketing and peer debriefing) and how these protocols complement the data analysis strategy. |  |  |  | **X** |
| Describes approaches used to ensure trustworthiness for qualitative data including expert panel review of questions, field test(s)/ practice interviews, member checking, and triangulation of data, as appropriate. |  |  |  | **X** |
| Justifies how the analysis aligns with the research question(s), and how data and findings were organized by chronology of phenomena, by themes and patterns, or by other approaches as deemed appropriate.  Develops a description of the phenomenon by synthesizing the data across the research questions. The synthesis approach used to develop the description of the phenomenon should be specific to the design used. |  |  |  | **X** |
| Section is written in a way that is well structured, has a logical flow, uses correct paragraph structure, sentence structure, punctuation, and APA format |  |  |  | **X** |
| **\*Score each requirement listed in the criteria table using the following scale:**  0 = Item Not Present or Unacceptable. Substantial Revisions are Required.  1 = Item is Present. Does Not Meet Expectations. Revisions are Required.  2 = Item is Acceptable. Meets Expectations. Some Revisions May be Suggested or Required.  3 = Item Exceeds Expectations. No Revisions are Required. | | | | |
| **Reviewer Comments:** | | | | |

## Results

### Presenting the Results

This section, which is the primary section of this chapter, presents an overview and analysis of the data in a nonevaluative, unbiased, organized manner that relates to the research question(s). List the research question(s) as they are discussed to ensure that the readers see that the question has been addressed. Answer the research question(s) in the order that they are listed by drawing on the thematic results and (if relevant) descriptive statistics. Learners can organize data in several different ways for qualitative studies including by research question, by themes and patterns for thematic analysis, or by other approaches deemed appropriate for the study, such as by the general phenomenological structure with a list of all constituents. The results must be presented without implication, speculation, assessment, evaluation, or interpretation, as the discussion of results and conclusions are left for Chapter 5. Refer to the APA Style Manual (2020) for additional lists and examples.

The results do not merely include using themes to answer research questions, it is important to develop a description of the phenomenon that is specific to the design based on synthesizing the data cross the research questions and data analysis. For a qualitative descriptive design, this involves providing a detailed description of the phenomenon through a narrative and visuals. For a case study, this involves producing a case study summary that can include narrative and visuals. For grounded theory it can include the creation of a theory, visual model, or process flow. For a narrative, depending upon the narrative approach selected it might include developing a single story that synthesizes the stories from all the participants. For phenomenology this final description varies based on the type of phenomenological design selected.

For learners who implemented a reflexivity protocol (such as bracketing or peer debriefing) to track and manage biases, the beginning of this section is an ideal place to synthesize those reflexivity notes into a composite of your preconceptions prior to data collection and analysis, as well as how those preconceptions may have biased your study. This step typically requires the learner to take a step back and think contemplatively about initial expectations for the data and results, and then compare these expectations with the actual perspectives provided by the participants (or the meanings derived from them). The narrative at the beginning of Chapter 4 Results section offers a good place to summarize any major preconceptions that might have colored the data analysis.

For qualitative studies, it is important to provide a complete, that is, holistic, picture of the analysis conducted and of the coding used to arrive at a set of themes or conclusions about the subject. In qualitative studies, if thematic analysis is used, the questions are examples of what to ask, and are not comprehensive:

1. What themes emerged across all data sources and how were those themes identified?
2. Does the learner provide examples that the themes exist from multiple, well-specified and described, sources of data?
3. What topics were mentioned most often?
4. What issues were most important to the people in the study?
5. How do the participants view the topic of research?
6. How can the categories identified in the data be ordered into meaningful, grounded theories?

After completing the first draft of Chapter 4, ask these general questions:

1. Are the findings clearly presented, so any reader could understand them?
2. Are the findings presented with a narrative thread, which provides a “storyline” to coherently connect the data that has been analyzed?
3. Are all the tables, graphics or visual displays well-organized and easy to read?
4. Are the important data described in the text?
5. Is factual data information separate from analysis and evaluation?
6. Are the data organized by research questions or by themes?

Make sure to include appropriate graphics to present the results. Always *introduce*, *present*, and *discuss* the visual organizers in narrative form prior to the visual organizer placement. Never insert a visual organizer without these three steps.

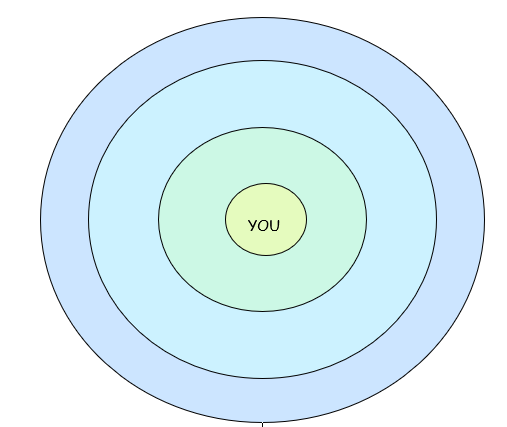
A figure is a graph, chart, map, drawing, or photograph. Do not include a figure unless it adds substantively to the understanding of the results or it duplicates other elements in the narrative. If a figure is used, a label must be placed above the figure. As with tables, refer to the figure by number in the narrative preceding the placement of the figure. Make sure a table or figure is not split between pages. lopesup

Here is an example of how a table might be set up to visually illustrate results:

**Table 9**  
  
*Initial Codes*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Code | Column A  *Description of Code* | Column B  *Examples from Transcript* |
| Name of Code 1 | Description of code | Provide multiple examples from transcripts |
| Name of Code 2 | Description of code | Provide multiple examples from transcripts |
| Name of Code 3 | Description of code | Provide multiple examples from transcripts |
| *Note.* Adapted from: Sampling and Recruitment in Studies of Doctoral Students, by I.M. Researcher, 2010, *Journal of Perspicuity*, 25, p. 100. Reprinted with permission. | | |

**Figure 4**  
  
*Diagram of a Blank Sociogram*



| **Criterion**  \***(Score = 0, 1, 2, or 3)** | **Learner Score** | **Chair Score** | **Methodologist Score** | **Content Expert Score** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **RESULTS**  (Number of pages as needed) | | | | |
| Data and the analysis of that data are presented in a narrative, non-evaluative, unbiased, organized manner.  In thematic analysis, the researcher should address saturation and the distribution of themes that emerged when themes were not present in all data sets. Qualitative, thematically-analyzed data may be organized by theme, participant and/or research question.  In phenomenology the research should address the stability of the structure based on each constituent being essential, not merely frequent.  Note, this addresses volume and quality of the data collected as germane to the phenomenon under study, not to population representativeness.  Results of analysis are presented in appropriate narrative, tabular, graphical and/or visual format. If using thematic analysis, coding and theming process must be clearly evident in the results presentation. Integration of quotes in the results presentation to substantiate the stated findings and build a narrative picture is required.  For a case study design, include a summary of the case (how did the analysis inform the case?).  Learner describes thematic findings mostly in own words in narrative form as if they are telling their story or summarizing their experiences, and then use selected quotes (ideally one or few sentences, no longer than one paragraph) to illustrate. |  |  |  | **X** |
| The outcome of the reflexivity protocol is reported in a way that helps the reader distinguish the learner’s preconceptions from the perspectives (and meanings) shared by participants. This discussion should touch on major preconceptions that may have biased the data analysis and what was done to mitigate these biases. |  |  |  | **X** |
| As appropriate, tables are presented for initial codes, themes and theme meanings, along with sample quotes. |  |  |  | **X** |
| Sufficient quantity and quality of the data or information appropriate to the research design is presented in the analyses to answer the research question(s). Evidence for this must be clearly presented in this section and in an appendix as appropriate.  Note: peer reviewer may request to review raw data at any time during the peer process. Additional data collection may be required if sufficient data is not present. |  |  |  | **X** |
| * Qualitative data analysis is fully described and displayed using techniques specific to the design and analytic method used. * Data sets are summarized including counts AND examples of participant’s responses for thematic analysis. For other approaches to qualitative analysis, results may be summarized in matrices or visual formats appropriate to the form of analysis. * Findings may be presented as themes using section titles for thematic analysis, as stories for narrative designs, as models or theories for grounded theory, and as visual models or narrative stories for case studies. |  |  |  | **X** |
| Appendices must include qualitative data analysis that supports results in Chapter 4 as appropriate (i.e. source tables for coding and theming process or codebook, if not included directly in Chapter 4). |  |  |  | **X** |
| Section is written in a way that is well structured, has a logical flow, uses correct paragraph structure, sentence structure, punctuation, and APA format. |  |  |  | **X** |
| **\*Score each requirement listed in the criteria table using the following scale:**  0 = Item Not Present or Unacceptable. Substantial Revisions are Required.  1 = Item is Present. Does Not Meet Expectations. Revisions are Required.  2 = Item is Acceptable. Meets Expectations. Some Revisions May be Suggested or Required.  3 = Item Exceeds Expectations. No Revisions are Required. | | | | |
| **Reviewer Comments:** | | | | |

### ***Limitations***

Limitations are flaws or shortcomings with the study that either the researcher has no control over because they are inherent in the methods selected (e.g., sampling bias), or that are due to mishaps in the conduct of research (e.g., missing data). No study is free of limitations. It is important to acknowledge as many limitations as deemed pertinent in order to reflect integrity and transparency in the conduct of research. This section discusses limitations that emerged based specifically on data collection and data analysis, and how the interpretation of results may be affected by the limitations. State limitations that are inherent in the data sources, instruments, data collection methods, and/or data analysis approach, and address also additional limitations pertaining to shortcomings in how the data was collected, the amount or quality of the data collected, and/or how the data was analyzed. The learner should provide a rationale for each stated limitation and discuss associated consequences for transferability and applicability of the findings. Tie back the limitations to the anticipated limitations discussed in Chapter 1.

For example: The following limitations were present in this study:

* The study was limited to 10 teachers and four administrators, thus making the results less transferable;
* The study was limited to novice participants whose insights about the organization were partial and restricted. lopesup

| **Criterion**  \***(Score = 0, 1, 2, or 3)** | **Learner Score** | **Chair Score** | **Methodologist Score** | **Content Expert Score** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **LIMITATIONS**  (Typically one or two pages) | | | | |
| Lists limitations that emerged based specifically on data collection and data analysis, and how the interpretation of results may be affected by the limitations. |  |  |  | **X** |
| Discuss associated consequences for the transferability and applicability of the findings. |  |  |  | **X** |
| Discuss the current limitations in relation to the anticipated limitations originally presented in Chapter 1. |  |  |  | **X** |
| Section is written in a way that is well structured, has a logical flow, uses correct paragraph structure, sentence structure, punctuation, and APA format. |  |  |  | **X** |
| **\*Score each requirement listed in the criteria table using the following scale:**  0 = Item Not Present or Unacceptable. Substantial Revisions are Required.  1 = Item is Present. Does Not Meet Expectations. Revisions are Required.  2 = Item is Acceptable. Meets Expectations. Some Revisions May be Suggested or Required.  3 = Item Exceeds Expectations. No Revisions are Required. | | | | |
| **Reviewer Comments:** | | | | |

## Summary

This section provides a concise summary of what was found in the study. It briefly restates essential data and data analysis presented in this chapter, and it helps the reader see and understand the relevance of the data and analysis to the research question(s). The summary of the data must be logically and clearly presented, with the information separated from interpretation. For qualitative studies, summarize the data and data analysis results in relation to the research question(s). Finally, it provides a lead or transition into Chapter 5, where the implications of the data and data analysis relative to the research question(s) will be discussed. lopesup

| **Criterion**  \***(Score = 0, 1, 2, or 3)** | **Learner Score** | **Chair Score** | **Methodologist Score** | **Content Expert Score** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **SUMMARY**  (Typically one or two pages) | | | | |
| Presents a clear and logical summary of data analysis approach. |  |  |  | **X** |
| Summarizes the data and data analysis results in relation to the research questions. |  |  |  | **X** |
| Discusses limitations that emerged based on data collection and data analysis and how the interpretation of results may be affected by the limitations. |  |  |  | **X** |
| Provides a concluding section and transition to Chapter 5. |  |  |  | **X** |
| Section is written in a way that is well structured, has a logical flow, uses correct paragraph structure, sentence structure, punctuation, and APA format. |  |  |  | **X** |
| **\*Score each requirement listed in the criteria table using the following scale:**  0 = Item Not Present or Unacceptable. Substantial Revisions are Required.  1 = Item is Present. Does Not Meet Expectations. Revisions are Required.  2 = Item is Acceptable. Meets Expectations. Some Revisions May be Suggested or Required.  3 = Item Exceeds Expectations. No Revisions are Required. | | | | |
| **Reviewer Comments:** | | | | |

# Chapter 5: Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

## Introduction and Summary of Study

**The minimum progression milestone for a draft of the full dissertation manuscript (Preliminary Pages, Abstract, Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and Appendices) “Acceptance” by chair and submission to methodologist and content expert is in dissertation course 972E. Refer to Appendix L Minimum Progression Milestone Table and the most recent Dissertation Milestone Guide for additional details. Dissertation course 972E is the absolute latest course for full dissertation acceptance by chair and submission to committee members. Learners are highly encouraged to work ahead and submit the draft Chapter 5 and full dissertation draft in earlier dissertation courses.**

Chapter 5 is perhaps the most important chapter in the dissertation manuscript because it presents the researcher’s contribution to the body of knowledge. For many who read research literature, this may be the only chapter they will read. Chapter 5 typically begins with overview of why the study is important and how the study was designed to contribute to our understanding of the research topic within the context of the problem space identified in Chapter 2. The remainder of the chapter contains a summary of the overall study, a summary of the findings and conclusions, implications derived from the study, and a final section on recommendations for future research and practice.

No new data should be introduced in Chapter 5; however, references should be made to findings or citations presented in earlier chapters. The researcher can articulate new frameworks and new insights derived from the synthesis of study results. The concluding words of Chapter 5 should emphasize both the most important points of the study, study strengths and weaknesses, and directions for future research. This should be presented in the simplest possible form, making sure to preserve the conditional nature of the insights. Study findings should not be misinterpreted, exaggerated, or personalized. lopesup

| **Criterion**  \***(Score = 0, 1, 2, or 3)** | **Learner Score** | **Chair Score** | **Methodologist Score** | **Content Expert Score** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY OF STUDY**  (Typically two to four paragraphs or approximately one page) | | | | |
| Provides an overview of why the study is important and how the study was designed to contribute to understanding the topic and problem space. |  |  | **X** |  |
| Provides a transition, explains what will be covered in the chapter and reminds the reader of how the study was conducted. |  |  | **X** |  |
| Section is written in a way that is well structured, has a logical flow, uses correct paragraph structure, sentence structure, punctuation, and APA format. |  |  | **X** |  |
| **\*Score each requirement listed in the criteria table using the following scale:**  0 = Item Not Present or Unacceptable. Substantial Revisions are Required.  1 = Item is Present. Does Not Meet Expectations. Revisions are Required.  2 = Item is Acceptable. Meets Expectations. Some Revisions May be Suggested or Required.  3 = Item Exceeds Expectations. No Revisions are Required. | | | | |
| **Reviewer Comments:** | | | | |

## Summary of Findings and Conclusion

### Overall Organization

This section of Chapter 5 is organized by research question(s), and it conveys the specific findings of the study. The section presents conclusions made based on the data analysis and findings of the study and relates the findings back to the literature in Chapter 2. Significant themes/findings are compared and contrasted, evaluated, and discussed considering the existing body of knowledge. The significance of every finding is analyzed and related back to Chapter 2 discussion of the Problem Space and ties the study together. The findings are also bounded by the research study parameters described in Chapters 1 and 3, are supported by the data and theory, and directly relate to the research question(s). No unrelated or speculative information is presented in this section. Conclusions represent the contribution to knowledge and fill in what still needs to be understood in the knowledge as evidenced in the literature. They should also relate directly to the problem space. The conclusions are major generalizations, and an answer to the research problem developed in Chapters 1 and 2. This is where the study binds together. In this section, personal opinion is permitted, as long as it is backed with the data, grounded in the study results presented in Chapter 4, and synthesized/supported within the existing research literature presented in Chapter 2. lopesup

### Reflection on the Dissertation Process

The learner should end this section by discussing what they have learned throughout the dissertation process, specific to designing, conducting, and interpreting findings of their original research. This includes what changed in the learner’s understanding of research and the process. This also includes a thoughtful reflection on what was accomplished and/or a reflection on data collection or data analysis concerns that hindered or supported the intended accomplishment(s).

Reflective practices during the dissertation consist of the researcher thinking about and reflecting on their process (Finlay, 2002). Reflecting is important when there are challenges in the data reporting due to changes from the plan to the execution of the research project. The purpose of this added section is to provide the reader with a clearer understanding of what the researcher learned through the process of conducting this research, specifically with regards to designing, conducting, and interpreting findings. lopesup

| **Criterion**  \***(Score = 0, 1, 2, or 3)** | **Learner Score** | **Chair Score** | **Methodologist Score** | **Content Expert Score** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS**  (Typically three to five pages) | | | | |
| Organizes Chapter 5 using the same section titles as Chapter 4, by research question(s) or by themes. Significant themes/ findings are compared and contrasted, synthesized and discussed in light of the existing body of knowledge covered in Chapter 2 |  |  | **X** |  |
| Summarizes study findings. Compares, contrasts and synthesizes study findings in context to prior research on the topic (Chapter 2). Provides a cogent discussion on how the study is aligned to and/or advances the research on the topic. |  |  | **X** |  |
| Illustrates that findings are bounded by the research study design described in Chapters 1, 2 and 3. |  |  | **X** |  |
| Illustrates how findings are supported by the data and theory, and how the findings directly align to and answer the research question(s). |  |  | **X** |  |
| Discusses transferability of findings and relates each of the findings directly to the Background of the Study section of Chapter 1 and Identification of the Problem Space in Chapter 2. |  |  | **X** |  |
| Refrains from including unrelated or speculative information in this section. |  |  | **X** |  |
| Provides a conclusion to summarize the findings, referring to Chapters 4 and 2, and tying the study together. |  |  | **X** |  |
| The learner reflects back on their dissertation process specific to designing, conducting, and interpreting findings of their original research. This includes what changed in the learner’s understanding of research and the process. |  |  | **X** |  |
| Section is written in a way that is well structured, has a logical flow, uses correct paragraph structure, sentence structure, punctuation, and APA format. |  |  | **X** |  |
| **\*Score each requirement listed in the criteria table using the following scale:**  0 = Item Not Present or Unacceptable. Substantial Revisions are Required.  1 = Item is Present. Does Not Meet Expectations. Revisions are Required.  2 = Item is Acceptable. Meets Expectations. Some Revisions May be Suggested or Required.  3 = Item Exceeds Expectations. No Revisions are Required. | | | | |
| **Reviewer Comments:** | | | | |

## Implications

This section should describe what could happen because of this research. It also is an opportunity to inform the reader what the research implies theoretically, practically, and for the future. Additionally, it provides a retrospective examination of the theoretical framework presented in Chapter 2 considering the dissertation’s findings. A critical evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the study and the degree to which the conclusions are credible given the methodology, research design, and data, should also be presented. The section delineates applications of new insights derived from the dissertation to solve real and significant problems. Implications can be grouped into those related to theory or generalization, those related to practice, and those related to future research. Separate sections with corresponding headings provide proper organization. lopesup

### ***Theoretical Implications***

Theoretical implications involve interpretation of the dissertation findings in terms of the research question(s) that guided the study. It is appropriate to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the study critically and include the degree to which the conclusions are credible given the method and data. It should also include a critical, retrospective examination of the framework presented in the Chapter 2 Literature Review section considering the dissertation’s new findings. lopesup

### ***Practical Implications***

Practical implications should delineate applications of new insights derived from the dissertation to solve real and significant problems. These implications refer to how the results of the study can be applied in professional practice. lopesup

### ***Future Research Implications***

Two kinds of implications for future research are possible: one based on what the study did find or do, and the other based on what the study did *not* find or do. Generally, future research could look at different kinds of subjects in different kinds of settings, interventions with new kinds of protocols or dependent measures, or new theoretical issues that emerge from the study. Recommendations should be included on which of these possibilities are likely to be most fruitful and why. lopesup

### ***Strengths and Weaknesses of the Study***

This section includes a critical evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the study. Strengths and weaknesses pertain to the how the researcher conducted the study, and which a researcher would want to repeat or avoid in future studies. For example, a strength of the study might be the collection of ample, rich, “thick” data that supported an analysis of data that produced specific insights that contributed to the advancement of scientific knowledge. A weakness in a study might be the anticipated sample size was not obtained, the researcher did not provide sufficient probing or follow-up questions, thus limiting depth of query and final dataset. **This section is a critical evaluation and reflection on the degree to which the conclusions are credible given the methodology, research design, and data analysis and results.** lopesup

| **Criterion**  **\*(Score = 0, 1, 2, or 3)** | **Learner Score** | **Chair Score** | **Methodologist Score** | **Content Expert Score** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **IMPLICATIONS**  (Typically one to four pages) | | | | |
| **Theoretical implications.**  Provides a retrospective examination of the theoretical foundations presented in Chapter 2 considering the dissertation’s findings.  Connects the findings of the study back to the conceptual framework and the study results are discussed in context to how the results advance a practitioner’s knowledge of that theory, model, or concept. |  |  | **X** |  |
| **Practical Implications and Future Implications.** Connects the study findings to the prior research discussed in Chapter 2 and develops practical and future implications for research based on new insights derived from the research and how the results advance practitioners’ knowledge of the topic and how the results may influence future research or practice. |  |  | **X** |  |
| **Strengths and Weaknesses.**  Critically evaluates the strengths and weaknesses of the study, and the degree to which the conclusions are credible given the methodology, research design, and data analysis and results.  Learner reflects on the study and discusses what they would have continued or changed should they do this again |  |  | **X** |  |
| Section is written in a way that is well structured, has a logical flow, uses correct paragraph structure, sentence structure, punctuation, and APA format. |  |  | **X** |  |
| **\*Score each requirement listed in the criteria table using the following scale:**  0 = Item Not Present or Unacceptable. Substantial Revisions are Required.  1 = Item is Present. Does Not Meet Expectations. Revisions are Required.  2 = Item is Acceptable. Meets Expectations. Some Revisions May be Suggested or Required.  3 = Item Exceeds Expectations. No Revisions are Required. | | | | |
| **Reviewer Comments:** | | | | |

## Recommendations

This section allows the learner to add recommendations for future study based on the results of their authentic dissertation research. In this section, summarize the recommendations that result from the study. Each recommendation should be directly linked to a conclusion described in the previous section. lopesup

### ***Recommendations for Future Research***

This section should present recommendations for future research, as well as give a full explanation for why each recommendation is being made. Additionally, this section discusses the areas of research that need further examination or addresses what needed to be understood or new research opportunities the study found. The section ends with a discussion of “next steps” in forwarding this line of research. Recommendations relate back to the Problem Space and literature offered in Chapter 2. Lopesup

| **Criterion**  \***(Score = 0, 1, 2, or 3)** | **Learner Score** | **Chair Score** | **Methodologist Score** | **Content Expert Score** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**  (Typically one to two pages) | | | | |
| Lists a minimum of four to six recommendations for practitioners and for future research. |  |  | **X** |  |
| Identifies and discusses the areas that need further examination, or that will address what needed to be understood, that the study found. |  |  | **X** |  |
| Provides recommendations that relate back to the study significance and advancing scientific knowledge sections in Chapter 1 and theoretical foundations section in Chapter 2. |  |  | **X** |  |
| Section is written in a way that is well structured, has a logical flow, uses correct paragraph structure, sentence structure, punctuation, and APA format |  |  | **X** |  |
| **\*Score each requirement listed in the criteria table using the following scale:**  0 = Item Not Present or Unacceptable. Substantial Revisions are Required.  1 = Item is Present. Does Not Meet Expectations. Revisions are Required.  2 = Item is Acceptable. Meets Expectations. Some Revisions May be Suggested or Required.  3 = Item Exceeds Expectations. No Revisions are Required. | | | | |
| **Reviewer Comments:** | | | | |

### ***Recommendations for Future Practice***

This section outlines recommendations for future practice based on the results and findings of the study, as well as, a full explanation for why each recommendation is being made. It provides a discussion of who will benefit from reading and implementing the results of the study and presents ideas based on the results that practitioners can implement in the work or educational setting. Unrelated or speculative information that is unsupported by data is clearly identified as such. Recommendations should relate back to the study problem space discussion in Chapter 2. lopesup

| **Criterion**  \***(Score = 0, 1, 2, or 3)** | **Learner Score** | **Chair Score** | **Methodologist Score** | **Content Expert Score** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE PRACTICE**  (Typically three to four paragraphs or approximately one page) | | | | |
| Lists two to five recommendations for future practice. |  |  | **X** |  |
| Discusses who will benefit from reading and implementing the results of the study. |  |  | **X** |  |
| Discusses ideas based on the results that practitioners can implement in the work or educational setting. |  |  | **X** |  |
| Omits unrelated or speculative information that is unsupported by data. |  |  | **X** |  |
| Provides recommendations that relate back to Chapter 2. |  |  | **X** |  |
| The Chapter is correctly formatted to dissertation template using the *Word Style Tool* and APA standards. Writing is free of mechanical errors. |  |  | **X** |  |
| All research presented in the Chapter is scholarly, topic-related, and obtained from highly respected academic, professional, original sources. In-text citations are accurate, correctly cited and included in the reference page according to APA standards. |  |  | **X** |  |
| Section is written in a way that is well structured, has a logical flow, uses correct paragraph structure, sentence structure, punctuation, and APA format |  |  | **X** |  |
| **\*Score each requirement listed in the criteria table using the following scale:**  0 = Item Not Present or Unacceptable. Substantial Revisions are Required.  1 = Item is Present. Does Not Meet Expectations. Revisions are Required.  2 = Item is Acceptable. Meets Expectations. Some Revisions May be Suggested or Required.  3 = Item Exceeds Expectations. No Revisions are Required. | | | | |
| **Reviewer Comments:** | | | | |

### ***Holistic Reflection on the Problem Space***

In this section, the learner provides an overview of what the learner drew from the problem space, and how the study was relevant and contributed to what needed to be understood.

**Important Note: the minimum progression milestone for completing the full dissertation manuscript (Preliminary Pages, Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and Appendices), approved by all committee members, and successfully submitted/accepted to Level 5 Peer review is dissertation course 973E. Refer to Appendix L Minimum Progression Milestone Table and the most recent Dissertation Milestone Guide for additional details. Dissertation course 973E is the absolute latest course for dissertation manuscript submission and acceptance into Level 5 peer review. Learners are highly encouraged to work ahead and submit to Level 5 peer review in earlier dissertation courses with committee approval. Dissertation Course 974E is the minimum progression milestone to obtain the signed D-65 Form and submit dissertation manuscript to Form and Format.** lopesup

| **Criterion**  \***(Score = 0, 1, 2, or 3)** | **Learner Score** | **Chair Score** | **Methodologist Score** | **Content Expert Score** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **HOLISTIC REFLECTION ON THE PROBLEM SPACE.**  (Typically three to four paragraphs or approximately one page) | | | | |
| Provides an overview of what the learner drew from the problem space |  |  | **X** |  |
| Discusses how the study was relevant and contributed to what needed to be understood. |  |  | **X** |  |
| Section is written in a way that is well structured, has a logical flow, uses correct paragraph structure, sentence structure, punctuation, and APA format |  |  | **X** |  |
| **\*Score each requirement listed in the criteria table using the following scale:**  0 = Item Not Present or Unacceptable. Substantial Revisions are Required.  1 = Item is Present. Does Not Meet Expectations. Revisions are Required.  2 = Item is Acceptable. Meets Expectations. Some Revisions May be Suggested or Required.  3 = Item Exceeds Expectations. No Revisions are Required. | | | | |
| **Reviewer Comments:** | | | | |

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|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Criterion**  \***(Score = 0, 1, 2, or 3)** | **Learner Score** | **Chair Score** | **Methodologist Score** | **Content Expert Score** |
| Quality of Sources & Reference List  For every in-text citation a reference entry exists; conversely, for every reference list entry there is an in-text citation. Uses a range of references including founding theorists, peer-reviewed empirical research studies from scholarly journals, and government/foundation research reports. The majority of all references must be scholarly, topic-related sources. Websites, dictionaries, and publications without dates (n.d.) are not considered scholarly sources and should not be cited or present in the reference list. In-text citations and reference list must comply with APA 7th Ed. | | | | |
| Ensures that for every in-text citation a reference entry exists. Conversely, for every reference list entry there is a corresponding in-text citation. **NOTE**: The accuracy of citations and quality of sources must be verified by learner, chair and committee members. |  |  | **X** | **X** |
| Uses a range of references including founding theorists, peer-reviewed empirical research studies from scholarly journals, and government /foundation research reports. |  |  | **X** | **X** |
| Verifies that approximately 75% of all references are scholarly sources within the last 5 years. The 5-year time frame is referenced at the time of the proposal defense date and at the time of the dissertation defense date. This is a recommendation, not a requirement.  **Note:** Websites, dictionaries, publications without dates (n.d.), are not considered scholarly sources and are not cited or present in reference list. |  |  | **X** | **X** |
| Avoids overuse of books and dissertations.  **Books:** Recommend a maximum of 10 scholarly books that present cutting edge views on a topic, are research based, or are seminal works. *Note: when a book is cited this implies the learner has read the entire book.*  **Dissertations:** Recommend a maximum of 5 published dissertations. *Note: dissertations are not considered peer -reviewed; and therefore, should be cited judiciously.* |  |  | **X** | **X** |
| Section is written in a way that is well structured, has a logical flow, uses correct paragraph structure, sentence structure, punctuation, and APA format |  |  | **X** | **X** |
| **\*Score each requirement listed in the criteria table using the following scale:**  0 = Item Not Present or Unacceptable. Substantial Revisions are Required.  1 = Item is Present. Does Not Meet Expectations. Revisions are Required.  2 = Item is Acceptable. Meets Expectations. Some Revisions May be Suggested or Required.  3 = Item Exceeds Expectations. No Revisions are Required. | | | | |
| **Reviewer Comments:** | | | | |

# Appendix A. Ten Strategic Points

**This is a required appendix.** The Ten Strategic Points should be moved from the Preliminary Page at beginning of the Dissertation Template to this Appendix A in the final dissertation manuscript before moving into Level 7 Form and Formatting. lopesup

# Appendix B. Site Authorization

* **This is a required appendix.** You must have either a preliminary or formal site authorization letter for Level 2 Proposal Review. The formal site authorization letter is required for Level 4 IRB Review and Level 5 Dissertation Review.
* **If no site authorization is required, provide a statement stating that, and explain why not site authorization was needed.**
* **Preliminary Site Authorization.** At the proposal development stage, preliminary site authorization as evidenced by an email from the appropriate organizational personnel is acceptable, until a formal site authorization letter is obtained. Site authorization letters must be on letterhead of the organization providing permission and signed by the individual authorized to grant such permission per requirements below.
* **Formal Site Authorization.** Prior to IRB submission the learner must obtain formal site authorization to include:
* Written on organization letterhead.
* Dated within the last 12 months.
* Signed by an authorized representative of the site and includes the authorizing representative’s contact information.
* Clearly indicate activities for which researcher has obtained authorization. This is very important. The authorization should clearly indicate EXACTLY what authorization is being granted. For example: recruiting by email during work hours, interviewing primary teachers during their planning hours, distributing an electronic survey to staff members, granting access to email, etc.
* Site authorization information aligns exactly with recruitment materials, informed consent document, and the IRB application.
* To review sample site authorization letter template please refer to GCU’s IRB Research Center on the DC Network: (<https://dc.gcu.edu/documents/irb_documents__iris/irb_forms_templates_updated_jan_2018>)
* For purposes of confidentiality, site authorization letters will be deleted from this appendix by the Form and Format reviewer (Level 7 Review - just prior to dean’s signature) and the following text will be inserted: Site authorization(s) on file at Grand Canyon University. lopesup

# Appendix C. IRB Approval Letter

* **This is a required appendix**. The IRB approval letter is required for Level 5 Review and published in the final dissertation manuscript.
* When you receive IRB approval for your study, you will receive a determination (or approval) letter to move forward with data collection.
* Download (from iRIS) then copy/paste a copy of the determination (approval) letter you received from the IRB in this appendix prior to submitting for Level 5 peer review. *This letter must be the actual copy issued from IRB, not something the learner types up themselves.* *lopesup*

# Appendix D. Informed Consent

* **This is a required appendix.**
* A draft of the consent form must be included at Level 2 Review.
* The IRB approved (stamped) informed consent document is required for Level 5 Review and published in the final dissertation manuscript.
* The IRB Research Center contains the most recent Informed Consent Template. It is essential that learners use the current Informed Consent template to comply with new federal regulations. Important Note: IRB applications submitted using older versions of the Informed Consent Template will require revision to the most current template.
* The current informed consent form is located on the DC Network (<https://dc.gcu.edu/documents/irb_documents__iris/irb_forms_templates_updated_jan_2018>). lopesup

# Appendix E. Copy of Instrument(s) and Permission Letters to Use the Instrument(s)

**This is a required appendix**. Each separate instrument should be located within this Appendix, and should reflect the name of the instrument, protocol or scoring method, along with any letters of permission, if pertinent. Note that many researchers who conduct qualitative studies do not use instruments or protocols from other studies, unless they have been revised to address the indicated Problem Space and research, since qualitative studies are highly contextualized and specific. If instrument authorization is needed for a qualitative study, refer to the following requirements:

* Should be from an author or administrator of the organization
* A written letter, e-mail, or a screenshot of the email correspondence is sufficient
* Instrument authorization should contain the following items:
* The specific name of the instrument to be used
* For what purpose the instrument will be used
* If possible, statement that the person granting authorization *owns the copyright* (sometimes that is not the author of the instrument, it could be the journal in which the instrument was first published)
* Authorization is granted to use the instrument
* If an instrument will be published in the dissertation, authorization to reproduce the instrument in the published dissertation must be obtained from the author(s) and included in this appendix.
* Authorization is granted to modify the instrument from the author and the CDS associate dean (if applicable, typically this is not advised, as altering surveys can negate the validity)
* Evidence you are qualified to administer, score and interpret the data obtained from the instrument. lopesup

# Appendix F. Codebook

**This is a required appendix.** There are many ways to construct a Codebook in qualitative research, and learners can draw from those approaches by citing the relevant research authorities. The most minimal approach, however, should still produce a table of **all codes** generated from the analysis regardless of their cycle, along with “definitions” for each code. A “definition” entails the interpretive meaning that made a particular code necessary in the mind of the learner and might offer clues on the situational context tied to that meaning. Because the focus is on the codes exclusively, it does not entail the listing of higher categories or themes, or the tracing of codes to those themes (which is really what should be discussed and illustrated in Ch. 4-Data Analysis Procedures and Ch. 4-Results). lopesup

**Table F1**  
  
*Sample Codebook*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Code | Coding Cycle | Definition of Code |
| Name the code | xx | Define sufficiently so someone else could follow directions and code your data |
| xx | xx | xx |
| xx | xx | xx |
| Etc. |  |  |

# Appendix G. Transcripts

This is a required appendix. This appendix is added once data are analyzed to assist with the preparation of Chapters 4 and 5 and should include *excerpts* of de-identified interview transcripts. Learners are also required to upload raw data to a new folder in the LDP (either create a new 07 Data folder or into a new folder in the existing 05 Folder). This is a requirement for L5 Peer Review. [NOTE: GCU faculty are required to maintain all confidentiality pledged by learner per the IRB approved/stamped Informed Consent]. lopesup

The minimum number of pages for a transcript ranges between 8-15 single spaced pages per interview based on design. Transcripts Refer to Appendix K - Sample Frames, Interview Duration, Transcript Expectations. This requirement is to ensure the researcher obtained the breadth and depth of data needed for a robust qualitative study.

Transcripts showing codes (hand coded or codes within qualitative analysis software) and excerpts from coded transcripts or analyzed research materials are encouraged. lopesup

# Appendix H. Feasibility and Benefits Checklist

**Note: This appendix is for reference only; delete this appendix in the final dissertation manuscript**

As you develop your dissertation, please complete this table to help you consider the gatekeepers involved in your study, the possible risks, the benefits of the study, authorizations, and potential challenges. Research should have some benefits to be truly academic.

In addition, as you are designing your study, reading peer-reviewed journal articles and books, and talking to peers/colleagues, please consider the following:

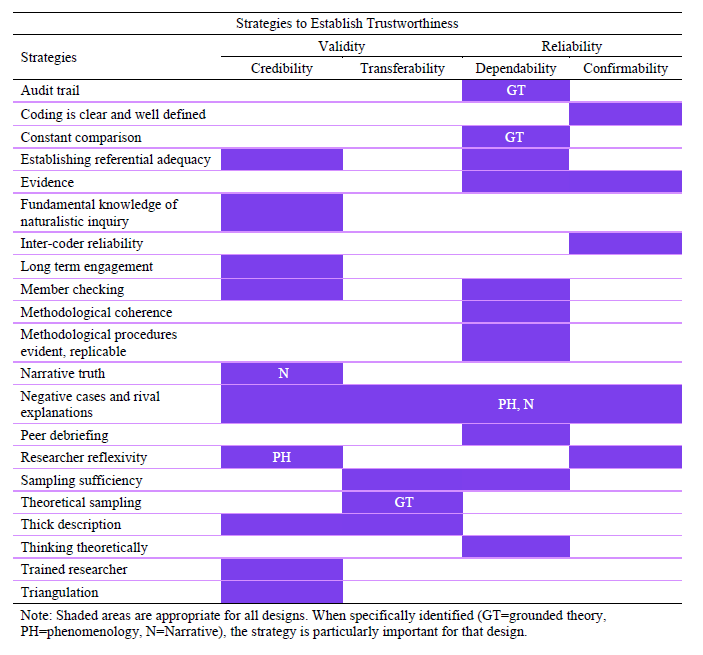
* Is your recruitment plan clear? (How will you access people that you want to talk to?)
* How will you obtain the data you want to use?
* Will you be able to collect data that you propose?
* Are the data analyses well-developed?
* Will you be able to accurately portray and understand what your participants/data had to say?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Gatekeepers:**  Who are the possible gatekeepers? (i.e., If you are in a school district, have you checked with the principal and the superintendent’s office or their designee to see what the process is for research? Or, if you are at a company, talked with the management, etc.?  If you are planning on collecting data from a college, what is the process? It is preferred that you obtain Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval from that institution prior to applying for GCU’s IRB approval). |  |
| **Gatekeeper Contact:**  Who do you need to keep in contact with as you form your research project to ensure that the benefits outweigh the risk and you can conduct your research? How will you initiate and maintain contact with them? |  |
| **Outside IRB:**  If you are planning on recruiting participants or getting data from a college (or other institutions with an IRB), have you talked to their IRB determine the process and what participants/data they will allow you access? Please note, IRB approval typically takes some time. |  |
| **Study Benefits:**  What is the benefit of your research? Who do you need to keep in contact with as you form your research project to ensure that the benefits outweigh the risks?  *Remember that research should have a benefit; what benefit does your research have to others beside yourself?* |  |
| **Research Activity:**  Is your research part of *normal every day activities*? This is significant because this must be outlined in your site authorization. A preliminary site authorization letter could simply be an email from a school/college/organization that indicates they understand what you want to do and how that benefits the school/college/organization. In some cases this will determine the classification of the study (this is especially important for educational research studies).  \*\*\*Please see below for information regarding preliminary site authorization |  |
| **Recruitment:**  Please describe your proposed recruitment strategy. How do you plan to involve your participants in the process? What would your flyer/email say? |  |
| **Data Collection:**  What are you asking of participants? Are you asking them personal information (like demographic information such as age, income, relationship status)? Is that personal information necessary? How much time are you asking of participants (for example, if you are asking them to be interviewed, be in a focus group, fill out a questionnaire, fill out a journal/survey, collect artifacts, etc.)? How much time will they have to spend to be in your study? Does each part of your data collection help answer your research question? Participants must be told how long it will take to them to participate in each activity. Are you concerned that the activities will take too long and participants might not finish/drop out?  Can you collect your data in a reasonable amount of time considering the stakeholders and possible challenges of gaining access to participants? |  |
| **Child Assent:**  Studies with children often fall under the regulations for a full board review (full board reviews take significantly longer in IRB). Each child must fill out a child assent AFTER there is parental consent. (It can be very difficult to get parental consent, especially if this is something sent home to parents). |  |
| **Informed Consent:**  Participants must be told how long it will take to participants to participate in each activity. Are you concerned that the activities will take too long and participants might not finish/drop out? |  |
| **Site Authorization:**  Do you have a site authorization letter? How difficult will this be to get from the school/ school district/college/organization? Use the GCU template to ensure the correct information is included. |  |
| Can you collect your data in a reasonable amount of time considering the stakeholders and possible challenges of gaining access to participants? |  |
| **Organizational Benefits:**  Have you talked to your principal/supervisor/district/college/boss/ organization about your research? If so, have you asked them what you can do to help the district/organization/school? |  |
| What is the overall benefit of your research to participants? |  |
| What are the risks of your research? Please note that there are usually some risks (like revealing participant identity) in all research. |  |
| Now that you have contemplated the above questions, how long do you imagine it will take you prior to access your participants/data? AND, how much are you asking of your participants? |  |
| Based on the information that you have learned, is your study feasible? Why or why not? If not, how can you modify your ideas to make your study manageable? |  |

* **Formal Site Authorization Requirements:**
* Written on organizational letterhead
* Dated within the last 12 months
* Signed by an authorized representative of the site
* Clearly indicate activities for which researcher has obtained authorization - This is very important. The authorization should clearly indicate EXACTLY what authorization is being granted. For example: recruiting by email during work hours, interviewing primary teachers during their planning hours, distributing an electronic survey to staff members, granting access to email, etc.
* This information must align with recruitment, informed consent and the IRB application
* **Instrument Authorization:**
* Should be from an author or administrator of the organization
* A written letter, e-mail, or a screenshot of the email correspondence is sufficient
* Instrument authorization should contain the following items:
* The specific name of the instrument to be used
* For what purpose the instrument will be used
* If possible, statement that the person granting authorization *owns the copyright* (sometimes that is not the author of the instrument, it could be the journal in which the instrument was first published)
* Authorization is granted to use the instrument
* Authorization is granted to modify the instrument from the author and the CDS associate dean (if applicable, typically this is not advised, as altering surveys can negate the validity)
* Evidence you are qualified to administer, score and interpret the data obtained from the instrument.
* Please see the DC network (<https://dc.gcu.edu/irb)> for help with the difference between anonymity and confidentiality, informed consent, site authorization, data use agreements and many other helpful videos and job-aids.
* Something to consider: If you are doing a quantitative study you can consider using a reputable research company, such as Qualtric, SurveyMonkey, Mturk, Prolific, to recruit study participants and collect data on your behalf; this is a VERY quick way to collect your data. Each company has their own requirements and capabilities. Please research to see how they can help you; it will depend on the eligibility criteria you have for your study and if they have access to that participant pool. Please note there are associated costs when using a research company for participant recruitment/data collection. lopesup

# Appendix I. Strategies to Establish Trustworthiness

**Note: This appendix is for reference only; delete this appendix in the final dissertation manuscript**



Used with Permission:

Chess, P.S. (2017). Chapter 3, Validity and reliability in qualitative research. In Grand Canyon

University (Ed). (2017). *GCU doctoral research: Advanced qualitative research methods.*

http://lc.gcumedia.com/res855/gcu-doctoral-research-advanced-qualitative-research-methods/v1.1/

lopesup

# Appendix J. Developing Qualitative Interview Questions Systematically

**Note: This appendix is for reference only; delete this appendix in the final dissertation manuscript**

Luis E. Zayas, PhD

Associate Professor & Peer Reviewer

College of Doctoral Studies

Grand Canyon University

Used with Permission

**Qualitative Interviewing**

* What is a qualitative interview?
* A conversation with a purpose – data gathering
* Open-ended format using probes
* Ideally with the least interviewer interjection as possible
* Interviewer is an extension of the instrument
* Requires many technical skills to elicit quality data
* Face-to-face vs telephone vs survey interviews
* Individual, in-depth vs. group interviews (small focus groups vs. large town hall meetings)

**Dramaturgy and Interviewing**

* Symbolic interactionism
* People perceive and interact in reality through the use of symbols
* The meaning of these symbols comes about as a result of a process of social interaction
* Interviewing as social performance
* Drama – a mode of symbolic action in which actors perform symbolically for an audience.
* Involves social actors and audience
* Active interviewing – meaning-making
* Interviewer’s role – actor, director, choreographer
* Interviewee’s role – leading actor in life drama

**Types of Qualitative Interviews**

* Major difference is degree of rigidity with regards to presentational structure
* Standardized (structured)
* *Semi-standardized (semi-structured)*
* Unstandardized (unstructured)

**Standardized Interviews**

* Similar in format to survey, but open-ended
* Use when you have a pretty good idea about the things you want to uncover
* Assumes the meaning of each Q is the same for every subject (positivist / objectivist framework)
* Operate from perspective that one’s thoughts are intricately related to one’s actions
  1. Examples:
* Tell me what you eat for breakfast? (laundry list)? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* How many times a week do you eat fruits? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* What kinds of physical activities do you engage in? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* Major limitations: short responses; lack of probing; manifest (literal) meaning, lack of context

**Semi-Standardized Interviews**

* Use when you have a general idea of what you want to elicit but do not want to restrict how it is presented
* Predetermined questions, special topics
* More flexibility in wording of questions and probing
* Assumes that not all subjects will necessarily find equal meaning in like-worded questions (phenomenological / relativistic framework)
* Reflects awareness that individuals understand the world in varying ways

See template and example

**Unstandardized Interviews**

* Use when you don’t know in advance what questions to ask (e.g. participant observation)
* Completely unstructured, no set order to Qs.
* Total flexibility in wording of questions and probing
* Same epistemological assumptions as semi-standardized (phenomenological / relativistic)
* Reflects awareness that individuals understand the world in varying ways
* Questions and probes appropriate to each given situation & to the purpose of the study

**Instrument Development (Brainstorming)**

* Determine the nature of the investigation and research objectives (how structured?)
* Develop an outline listing broad categories relevant to the study that are based on the literature or theory.
* Develop set of questions relevant to each of the categories in the outline
* Exercise: develop semi-structured schedule
* Topic: learning to cope with asthma

**Template for Instrument Development**

* Main Study Question
  1. Topic I:
     1. Q.1:
     2. Q.2:
     3. Q.3:
  2. Topic II:
     1. Q.4:
     2. Q.5:
     3. Q.6:
  3. Topic III:
     1. Q.7:
     2. Q.8:
     3. Q.9:
  4. What else that we’ve not discussed can you tell me…?

***Example of Questions Within a Template***

* RQ: How do adults w/ asthma living in communities w/ high asthma prevalence can learn to cope w/ the illness?
  1. Theme I: **Perceptions of asthma**.
     1. Q.1: What do you think asthma is?
     2. Q.2: What do you think gives people asthma?
     3. Q.3: What things worry you more about asthma?
  2. Theme II: **Coping with asthma**.
     1. Q.4: How can people take care of their asthma?
     2. Q.5: How does your doctor help you with your asthma?
     3. Q.6: What lifestyle changes can help people with asthma?
  3. Theme III: **Learning about asthma**.
     1. Q.7: How do you get information about asthma?
     2. Q.8: How do you learn to take care of your asthma?
     3. Q.9: How else could people get information about asthma?
     4. Q.10. What could be done to improve asthma education in your community?
     5. *Q.11. What else that we’ve not discussed thus far can you tell me about…?*

**Schedule Development (Sequencing)**

* Question order (sequencing)
  1. Start with easy, nonthreatening questions
  2. Next, more important questions (not sensitive)
  3. Then, more sensitive questions
  4. Validating questions (pertaining to important or sensitive questions)
  5. Next important topic or conceptual area of Qs.
  6. Repeat steps 3 and 4, and so on
* Content – level of language, wording
* Styles of Qs – essential, extra, throw-away (general Qs to develop rapport), probing
* Number of Qs based also on interview length and depth (e.g., 8-12 Qs for 60 min interview)
* **Problems in question formulation**
  1. Affectively worded questions
     + Try to neutralize the sense of the questions
       - “How come?” vs. “why did you do that wrong”?
  2. Double-barrel questions
     + “How many times have you smoked marijuana, or have you only tried cocaine”?
  3. Complex questions
     + Keep questions brief and concise
  4. Too many questions (long interviews)
     + Keep interview between 60-90 mins.
     + Telephone interviews 20-30 mins.

**Pretesting**

* Expert review
* Mock interview
* Assess for:
* Inclusion of all the necessary questions
* Do questions elicit the types of response anticipated?
* Is the language of the research instrument meaningful to the respondents?
* Are there other problems with the questions? (e.g., multiple issues addressed in single Q.)
* Does it motivate and engage respondents?

**Interview Training**

* Learning to build rapport
* Learn the questions, practice
* Develop listening skills
* Probing skills without leading
* Silence, echoing, follow leads
  + 1. Probes: repeat question, what, when, where, how, give me an example, tell me a story that illustrates that point, please elaborate on that.
* Issues of power
* Self-reflection
* Professionalism

**Focus Groups**

* Moderator’s guide similar to individual interview schedule, but must consider group dynamic
* Collective brainstorming, synergistic group effect
* Greater interviewing skill level required in order to moderate effectively
* Guide should be shorter (6-8 Qs) in order to engage as many participants as much as possible.
* Qs should NOT be same as individual interview Qs in studies using multiple sources of data collection
* FG Qs should explore a specific aspect of research problem or of findings from individual interviews. lopesup

**References**

Padgett, Deborah K. (2008). *Qualitative methods in social work research*. Sage Publications.

Zayas L.E., McLean D. Asthma patient education opportunities in predominantly minority urban communities. *Health Education Research*, 2007;*22*(6):757-769.

# Appendix K. Sample Frames, Interview Duration, Transcript Expectations

**Note: This appendix is for reference only; delete this appendix in the final dissertation manuscript**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Qualitative Research Design** | **Reasonable Sample Frame** | **Minimum Projected**  **Sample Size** | **Minimum Achieved Sample Size** |
| Case Study | 60+ individuals | 20 individuals | 10 individuals |
| Qualitative Descriptive | 60+ individuals | 20 individuals | 10 individuals |
| Phenomenology | 35+ individuals | 12 individuals | 8 individuals |
| Narrative Study | 35+ individuals | 12 individuals | 8 individuals |
| Grounded Theory | 60+ individuals | 20 individuals (\*iterative sampling) | 10 individuals |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Qualitative Research Design** | **Minimum**  **Interview Length  Per Person** | **Corresponding \***  **Minimum Transcript Length Per Person** | **Corresponding \***  **Minimum Transcript Range Per Person** |
| Case Study | 45+ minutes | 8+ pages single-space typed | 8-12 pages single-space typed |
| Qualitative Descriptive | 45+ minutes | 8+ pages single-space typed | 8-12 pages single-space typed |
| Phenomenology | 60+ minutes | 15+ pages single-space typed | 15-20 pages single-space typed per person |
| Narrative Study | 60+ minutes | 15+ pages single-space typed | 15-20 pages single-space typed |
| Grounded Theory | 45+ minutes | 8+ pages single-space typed | 8-12 pages single-space typed |

*\* “*Corresponding” projections above are based on the minimum interview length shown for each core design. Learners can pursue longer interviews, which would increase the corresponding range of transcript pages*.*

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# Appendix L. Minimum Progression Milestones

**Note: This appendix is for reference only; delete this appendix in the final dissertation manuscript**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Dissertation Course** | **Course Length (weeks)** | **Minimum Progression Requirement** | **Week of Pass/Fail Assignment Due** |
| **955** | 8 | Prospectus “Acceptance” by chair and methodologist | 6 |
| **960** | 8 | Draft Chapter 2 or 3 “Acceptance” by chair and Submission to content expert or methodologist | 6 |
| **965** | 8 | Draft Chapter 3 or 2 “Acceptance” by chair and Submission to methodologist or content expert | 6 |
| **966E** | 12 | Draft Chapter 1 “Acceptance” by chair and submission to methodologist and content expert | 10 |
| **967E** | 12 | Full Finalized Proposal Submitted to Committee Members \*learner may progress forward if this is not achieved, but will be required to meet the minimum requirement in the next course | 11  (not pass/fail\*) |
| **968E** | 12 | Successful submission and admittance to Level 2 Peer Review | 10 |
| **969E** | 12 | Level 2 Peer Review Approval (D-35) | 10 |
| **970E** | 12 | IRB Approval (D-50) | 10 |
| **971E** | 12 | Draft Chapter 4 “Acceptance” by chair and submission to methodologist | 10 |
| **972E** | 12 | Full dissertation “Acceptance” by chair and submission to methodologist and content expert | 10 |
| **973E** | 12 | Successful submission and admittance to Level 5 Peer Review | 10 |
| **974E** | 12 | D-65 and successful submission and admittance to F&F | 11 |

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Learners should work on their dissertation a **minimum of 20 hours per week**. Less time spent may hinder successful completion of minimum progression requirements.

# Appendix M. Additional Appendices

**Note: This appendix is for reference only; delete this appendix in the final dissertation manuscript if no additional appendices are needed**

Additional appendices may include descriptive data, statistical results, raw data (as appropriate), or other critical information pertinent to the dissertation. For the proposal, consider including all recruitment scripts (flyers, email text) and other documents planned for use in the study. Consult with the chair on additional appendices appropriate for the dissertation.

Example:

**Copy of the Invitation to Participate (Study Advertisement)**

Learners should provide a template of the recruitment materials that will advertise the study to candidates from the target population. For example, this might entail a preview of the email outreach or other forms of communication, such as a traditional letter, a posted flier, a web-forum post, or a full web-page advertisement. Recruitment materials are important in qualitative research because they advertise the inclusion criteria for the study and help enforce the sampling strategy.

**Important Note:** for learners who plan to use a web-forum or webpage to advertise their study, please be aware that you cannot publish a live post or webpage pertaining to your study until GCU-IRB has completed its review and assigned IRB approval. You can only preview its design in this Appendix as part of the proposal. Lopesup