



Ph.D. In Information Science & Learning Technologies

...the intersection of information and learning...



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Introduction

Welcome! This handbook is intended for admitted PhD students in University of Missouri's School of Information Science and Learning Technologies. Our PhD program offers a unique opportunity for you to study and conduct research in the intersection of learning and information sciences. Our School of Information Science and Learning Technologies (SISLT) is proud to be an [iSchool](#), dedicated to exploring the relationships between people, information, and technology. SISLT is located within a major research university, which provides our students with a wide range of resources and research possibilities, and our graduates with an enhanced set of credentials.

NOTE – Contact your advisor!
This handbook is provided to guide you – but making contact with and working with your assigned advisor (as specified in your admissions letter) is key to your success and is also your responsibility. Your advisor is always a good point of contact for questions and concerns about your PhD program.

Overview of PhD process in SISLT

Figure 1 depicts an overview of the phases of the PhD process in SISLT. It is not intended to show durations (as in months for each phase), but rather, the main milestones that will occur as you pursue your PhD.

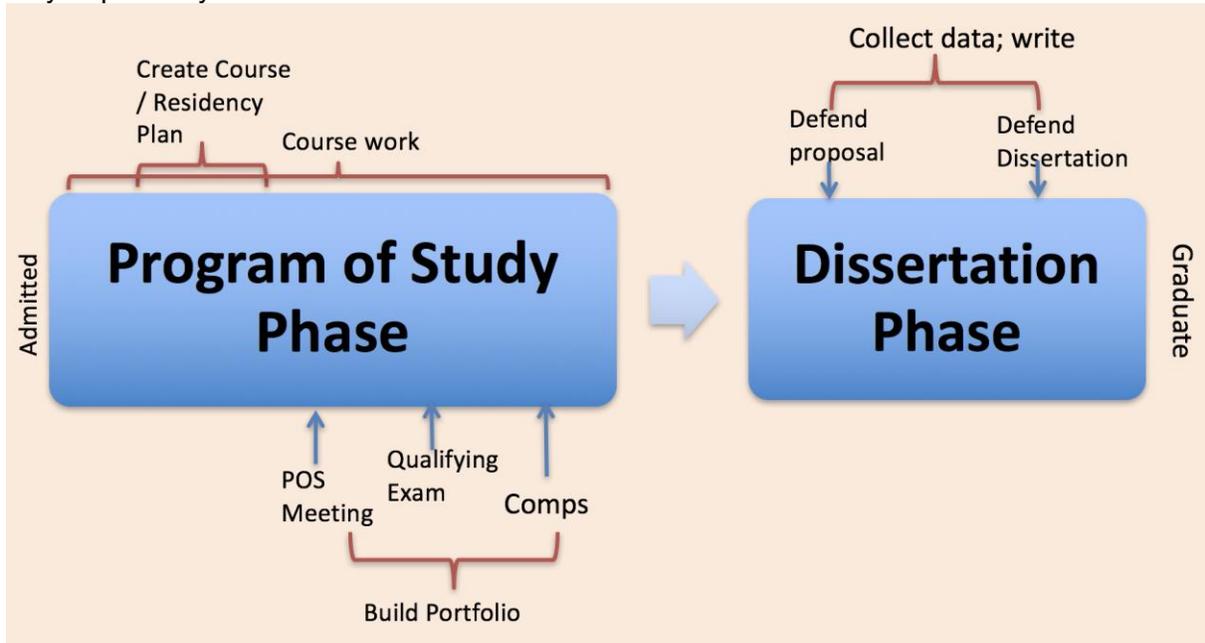


Figure 1. SISLT PhD Process Overview

Degree Requirements

All degree requirements are in alignment with the MU Office of Graduate Studies requirements for PhD degrees.¹ The SISLT PhD is designed to develop your competencies in the following three areas:

1. System Design and Development
2. Teaching
3. Research and Writing

The following paragraphs will give you an overview of the phases and requirements of your program. For more details, read the section called “Residency Activities.”

Coursework

Prerequisite Courses

SISLT recognizes that students come to the program with diverse backgrounds. Your advisor and PoS committee will work with you to determine which prerequisite coursework will be included in your program of study. Please note that any transfer credits must be approved by your PoS committee AND the Graduate School.

Entering Doctoral Student One-Credit Seminar

- Required the first semester you enter the doctoral program
- Generally consists of 3 or 4 four-hour Friday or Saturday sessions
- Provides you with tools to begin your doctoral work successfully; meet faculty and other students; learn and practice what is expected of doctoral students

Doctoral Seminar Courses (IS_LT 9411, 3 credits each, offered in face to face mode)

- 9 credit hours minimum. Includes:
 - Design and analysis of Research in Information Science and Learning Technologies-(3 credits; fulfills College of Education department-specific inquiry course requirement)
 - Research and Theory Seminars on topics such as Human Computer Interaction, Human Information Behavior (see the SISLT web site for more information).

Elective SISLT Coursework

- 18 credit hours minimum.

Research Methodologies

- 9 credit hours minimum. Includes:

¹ <http://gradstudies.missouri.edu/academics/graduation-requirements/doctoral-grad-requirements.php>

- At least one course in qualitative research design and one course in quantitative research design.
- You should choose research methods courses that will support your dissertation. You may choose them from the College of Education's research method courses², or you may look outside the College of Education if your PoS committee thinks it is appropriate. It is important to discuss this with your advisor and PoS.

Supporting Field

- 9 credit hours minimum
- Your supporting field must be an area of emphasis outside of SISLT. Select this in consultation with your advisor and your PoS committee.

Residency, Comprehensive Exams (comps), Portfolio and Dissertation

Professional Residency Immersion Plan

- Immerses you into professional practices and activities.
- For more information, see the Residency section below.

Qualifying Examination

- Occurs after PoS approval and before comprehensive exams.
- Assesses if you are making adequate progress towards degree competencies.
- For more information, see the Qualifying Exam section below and contact your advisor.

Pre-comprehensive Exam Portfolio

- Preparation of portfolio is ongoing. Review occurs immediately prior to comprehensive exams.
- Provides evidence that you have met the main competencies of the PhD program (system design and development, teaching, and research and writing) and completed your residency plan.
- Successful completion and review of the portfolio by your PoS committee will indicate that you are eligible to take your Comprehensive Exams.
- For more information, see the Building Your Pre-Comprehensive Exam Portfolio section below.

Comprehensive Examination

- Occurs after Portfolio Review but before Dissertation.
- Provides an assessment of your comprehensive knowledge of information science and learning technologies, specifically focusing on research and systems.
- For more information, see the Residency section below.

² At this writing, at <https://education.missouri.edu/research/research-support/>, "list of research courses"

Dissertation Proposal

- Occurs after successful completion of Comprehensive Exam.
- See details on content below.
- Successful completion of the dissertation proposal defense will indicate that you are ready to begin your dissertation research.

Dissertation

- Occurs after successful completion of Dissertation Proposal.
- Implementation and write up of a major research project.
- Dissertation course credits are 12 credit hours beyond all coursework. Enroll in these credits while doing your dissertation work.

Internships

- Teaching – Teaching internship credit may be granted when you independently teach a course or serve as a Teaching Assistant in a course.
- Research – Research internship credit may be granted when you work with a faculty member to produce one or more publications ready for submission to a journal or refereed conference presentation.

Annual Progress Update and Review

SISLT doctoral faculty will administer annual reviews of all doctoral students in agreement with the policies of the Graduate Faculty Senate and the Office of Graduate Studies requirements for such reviews. The purpose of an Annual Review is to measure academic progress toward the degree and to provide an opportunity for faculty advisors and students to make changes to improve progress, and to plan for specific milestones.

Annually (in the spring) you will be asked to meet with your advisor individually to go over your progress and complete a form to document that progress. You will discuss both strengths of your accomplishments as well as things that you may need to improve or change in the coming year. This review will address **all aspects of your doctoral work and activities in SISLT**, e.g. course work, research and teaching internship, graduate or teaching assistantship activities (including data from teaching or GRA supervisor). These data will be used in a meeting of all SISLT doctoral faculty to determine an overall rating of **satisfactory or unsatisfactory**.

This rating will be based on your full or part time status, you stated completion date (they provide this when they first enter the program), the length of time you have been in the SISLT program, the progress you have made this last academic year based on the degree requirements, as well as your work in research projects, research or teaching internships. Extenuating circumstances (e.g. illness, family issues) will be considered.

Your faculty advisor will communicate to you the satisfactory or unsatisfactory rating and document the reasons for either rating on the form.

Below are the actions and consequences of unsatisfactory ratings

- A First time unsatisfactory – You will receive a specific plan in writing of activities and things you must improve in the next year. These plans will be designed to address the reasons for your unsatisfactory rating.
- A Second time unsatisfactory (non-consecutive) — You will be scheduled to meet with the SISLT Director of Graduate Studies and SISLT Director. The meeting will produce a specific plan of action for the student and a general approach to continuing in the ISLT doctoral program.
- Second time unsatisfactory (consecutive) — The DGS and SISLT Director may place you on academic [probation](#) as defined by MU Graduate Studies. In the letter of probation, which will also be submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies, specific actions and timelines must be established in order for you to be removed from probation. If you fail to meet the expectations outlined in the letter of probation, you may be dismissed from the doctoral program.

Adhering to Ethical Standards

All doctoral students must adhere to all Graduate Studies regulations regarding ethical conduct in your graduate work³. According to Graduate studies, a violation of ethical standards includes, but is not limited to, conduct associated with plagiarism, human subjects violations, authorship order for publications and presentations, data management, and conflict of interest.

Violations of these standards may be grounds for revocation of funding, and / or expulsion from the program.

Program of Study Phase Activities

A program of study is a “contract” of the courses you will complete and the activities you will perform to meet the SISLT PhD Degree requirements.

Doctoral Program of Study committee

³ <http://gradstudies.missouri.edu/academics/scholarly-integrity-ethics/>

During your first year, you will form your Doctoral Program of Study committee. This committee works with you to identify and approve a Program of Study (PoS), ensuring that you meet all minimum requirements of the IS< doctoral program. In addition, your Doctoral Program committee helps you plan and execute other professional aspects of your degree program (e.g., identifying appropriate venues for presentations and publications). This committee also approves requests for transfer of graduate credit and guides you through the comprehensive examination process.

Begin to form your committee soon after you are admitted to the program so that will have a complete committee in place well in advance of your PoS approval meeting.

Committee Membership: The Doctoral PoS Committee must have a minimum of four members. At least three (one of whom is your advisor) of those four members must be from SISLT and the fourth member must be an MU faculty member from a department or school other than SISLT. You and your advisor may determine that a fifth member for your committee is appropriate. In that case, the fifth member may be from SISLT, from another MU program, or a person outside of MU who holds special expertise.

Designing your Program of Study

Your PoS will include:

A **proposed schedule of courses** that meets the requirements presented above, including any relevant courses completed prior to being accepted into the Ph.D. program. See the Doctoral Program Planning Sheet, on [SISLT PhD Resources page](#). Course work must total a minimum of 72 hours beyond a bachelor's degree, including 15 hours of 8000-9000 level coursework exclusive of readings, research, problems and independent study experiences.

A **Residency Plan** (see requirements below), describing as explicitly as possible all of the Professional Immersion activities you plan to complete to complement your coursework.

Residency Requirements and Plan

The Professional Immersion Residency Requirement - referred to as the "residency requirement" is designed to help you articulate skills or competencies that you must exhibit prior to completing your comprehensive examination.

The requirement has two components: a **duration of time** of being "resident" on the MU Columbia campus, and **activities** that you will engage in (generally outside of coursework) to help you demonstrate your development as a professional in the field.

Residency is an opportunity to:

- Perform concentrated, uninterrupted work on your academic preparation through intense attention to coursework, projects, research, and active participation in academic life

- Become socialized in the values and norms of the profession
- Increase your levels of professional independence and responsibility
- Foster your transition from student to colleague
- Involve yourself in out-of-class interaction with fellow students and faculty on substantive issues
- Become involved in professional activities of various kinds
- Become familiar with professional resources and learn how to access and use them

Time Requirement: Residency includes a time period when you are predominantly a full time student on the MU Columbia campus, and is designed to immerse you in both coursework and academic culture. This period of time will allow you to more fully engage with your fellow doctoral students and faculty and participate in campus-wide activities that are helpful to doctoral students.

Specifically, we require you to enroll for **six graduate credits applicable to your PoS for two terms within a 12 month period**. During this period, you will also engage in activities that will enhance your research, teaching, and professional profile. Some examples are provided below. The specific combination of activities for your Residency Requirements will be determined in consultation with your PoS Committee.

Residency Activities

A description of the professional activities you will perform to meet residency (your Residency Plan) is a required part of your Program of Study. This plan should include activities in each of the following categories:

- Research and Writing
- Professional Service
- Teaching
- System Design and Development
- Professional Participation

Examples / suggestions for how to address each of these categories is further defined in the sub-sections below.

Your Program of Study Committee will evaluate the residency plan. The following criteria will be used to evaluate the plan:

- Relevance to your professional goals
- Quality of participation
- Quantity of participation
- Variety of participation activities
- Demonstration of initiative
- Demonstration of collaboration
- Demonstration of independence
- Opportunity for written, oral, and electronic communication

Prior to your PoS committee meeting, you should collaborate with your advisor on the construction of your Professional Immersion Residency Plan. Your PoS Committee will review your program and negotiate alternative or additional activities that you should complete prior to the Comprehensive Examination.

IMPORTANT RESOURCE:

Use the Ph.D. Professional Immersion Residency Planning form (on SISLT PhD Resource page) to guide your Residency Plan development.

The following sections provide sample activities that would meet requirements for research and writing, teaching and professional participation. Please note: research and publication are vital to your growth as a scholar, and will be expected of you as a doctoral student.

Research and Writing Examples

- Author/co-author a research article
- Author/co-author a practice article
- Present a paper at a state, regional, national, or international conference
- Develop a grant proposal
- Contribute to a professional newsletter
- Critique a colleague's research article draft
- Produce a working paper for discussion
- Conduct collaborative research with fellow students
- Conduct collaborative research with a faculty member
- Work as a research assistant

Teaching Examples

- Teach a course
- Develop course instructional materials
- Develop instructional evaluation materials
- Prepare instructional aids
- Work as a teaching assistant
- Proctor an exam

System Design and Development

- Manage a system development team
- Analyze a complex system and propose improvements
- Participate on a system development team
- Design a system prototype
- Articulate the parts and relationships in an existing system
- Use and review an existing system

Professional Service

- Serve in a professional elected or appointed office
- Organize a professional conference
- Serve as chair/discussant at a professional meeting
- Serve on department, college, university, or professional committees
- Edit a professional newsletter
- Organize an invited speaker session
- Serve in a graduate student organization
- Serve as a journal field reviewer
- Organize study groups, seminars, forums, or a lecture series

Professional Participation

- Participate in a professional seminar
- Attend professional colloquia and seminars
- Attend national or international professional meetings
- Attend state or regional professional meetings
- Attend relevant professional presentations on campus
- Host visitors to campus
- Initiate and lead a seminar with faculty participation
- Participate in a study group or professional network
- Observe colleagues in an innovative or exemplary program
- Serve as a research subject

Doctoral Program of Study Review Meeting

You and your advisor will work together to develop your Program of Study (PoS) plan (which includes your course work to meet degree requirements and your residency plan). After you have a solid draft of your PoS that has been approved by your advisor, you should schedule a meeting with your entire PoS Committee.

The purpose of the meeting is to ensure that your coursework and residency plan will prepare you to write your dissertation and meet your professional goals. During the meeting, your committee will review your proposed PoS coursework and residency plans and recommend alternative or additional courses and residency activities that you will be required to complete prior to completing your comprehensive exams.

Committee acceptance of your Program of Study is indicated by the signature of each member of your Program Committee on the Doctoral Program Planning Sheet, your Professional Immersion Planning form, and the graduate school's D2 Program of Study Form. All of these documents are available on the SISLT [PhD Resources page](#).

Building Your Pre Comprehensive Exam Portfolio

Academics are required to regularly document their work. Shortly after you enter the program, and throughout your residency and professional immersion period, you will begin constructing your online academic portfolio (see Figure 1). Your portfolio must demonstrate to SISLT faculty, and future colleagues and employers, who you are professionally and what you study.

Your portfolio will demonstrate skills and knowledge in the following areas:

- Research and Writing
- Teaching
- System Development
- Professional Service
- Professional Participation

Your advisor can provide you with feedback on your portfolio. Once you receive your advisor's approval, your entire PoS committee will review the portfolio. They must judge that it sufficiently demonstrates your abilities in the above areas BEFORE you will be allowed to proceed with your comprehensive exams.

Note as well that your PoS committee may question you regarding the contents of your portfolio at your comprehensive exam orals.

The design of your portfolio website is important! Look to other students' portfolios as examples.

Qualifying Examination

Approximately one to two semesters after you have had your Program of Study and Residency plan approved by your PoS committee, AND BEFORE you may complete your portfolio and take comprehensive exams, you will be required to complete a qualifying examination.

The exam task will require you to complete a task that academic professionals would be required to perform. For example, we might have you provide a scholarly review of a journal or conference paper submission.

Further details are as follows:

- Your PoS committee will provide you with the task.
- You will have one calendar week to complete the task.
- Your qualifying exam will be evaluated by your PoS committee to determine your readiness to continue completing your PoS and residency plans. You will receive either pass or a fail.
- If you fail, you will be allowed the option for one retake, timing determined by your PoS committee. If you fail a second time, you will be removed from the SISLT PhD program.

- Upon successful completion, you will complete the **graduate school D-1 form** and turn the completed form into SISLT Student Services office.

Comprehensive Exams

The comprehensive examination is an assessment of your comprehensive knowledge of information science and learning technologies. It is your responsibility to inform your committee members of your intent to complete your comprehensive exam prior to the beginning of the semester in which you plan to complete the exam.

The comprehensive examination consists of three parts:

- Portfolio
- Written component
 - Week 1: Research Question
 - Week 2: Systems Question
- Oral Defense

The oral defense of the comprehensive examination is a public meeting and may cover any or all of the following:

- Any part of your portfolio
- Any part of your written component of the comprehensive examination
- Your defense of a particular point of view or philosophy
- An evaluation of your experience and professional growth as a result of graduate work to date

Additionally, the comprehensive exam includes an assessment of your knowledge of your support field. This information describes the comprehensive examination process related to your major (ISLT); the support field examination process varies from field to field.

Results of the Comprehensive Exam

The Program Committee will evaluate the comprehensive examination based on the rubrics posted on the SISLT PhD Resource page and then render one of the following judgments:

- Pass, indicating that you are ready to begin the dissertation;
- Pass with Distinction, indicating excellence in preparation and that you are ready to begin the dissertation;
- Failure, indicating you have not demonstrated to the Committee adequate comprehensive knowledge of the field. This could apply to a single or both of the written comps questions and / or the portfolio content or oral defense.

Student Procedure after a Failure of the Comprehensive Exam

You may request to attempt the examination a second time. If the Program Committee approves, the Committee will prescribe an additional course of study intended to better prepare you.

A student may fail the whole comprehensive exam, performance on one or more of the written questions, or oral defense. If a student fails a portion of the comprehensive exam, the Program Committee has the option to allow the student to retake only that portion of the exam.

The second administration of the comprehensive examination must occur at least six months after the first attempt, and you must provide evidence of extensive efforts to prepare for the examination. If you fail the second attempt, you will be dismissed from the program. You must pass both portions of the written comprehensive exam in order to move on to the dissertation phase.

Important:

Refer to the Doctoral Comprehensive Examination D-3 Checklist on the [SISLT PhD Resource Page](#) to ensure that you follow the process!

Dissertation Phase Activities

- Decide on the format of your dissertation – traditional or 3-article study. See details below.
- Form your dissertation committee. Often this committee is similar to the committee that supervises comprehensive exams.
- Write your dissertation proposal
- Schedule and conduct your dissertation proposal defense. The defense must be scheduled during the Fall or Spring semester, and it must take place in a private room. Your committee must have your dissertation proposal in their hands 2 weeks prior to the defense.
- After successful completion of the dissertation proposal defense, implement the research plan outlined in your proposal, and collect your dissertation data
- Complete data collection and analyze data. Finish written dissertation.
- Schedule and conduct your dissertation defense. Your dissertation committee must have your proposal in their hands 2 weeks prior to the defense.
- After successful completion of the dissertation defense, and after making any edits or amendments required by your committee, you must submit your dissertation to the Graduate School. For more information, see the Office of Graduate Studies' submission requirements for theses and dissertations.⁴

Dissertation committee

The **Dissertation Committee** must consist of a minimum of three SISLT faculty members and one member from an academic program other than SISLT, typically from your minor or

⁴ As of this writing, at <http://gradstudies.missouri.edu/forms-downloads/thesis-dissertations.php>

supporting field (your “outside” member). Your outside member might be a subject or methodology expert associated with your work. The Dissertation Committee **chair** must be a full time faculty member whose majority appointment is with SISLT. All members of your committee must be MU doctoral faculty.

You are encouraged to include those faculty members who can best support your line of research as members of your Dissertation Committee.

During your entire dissertation phase, you must maintain continuous enrollment at MU, including summer session enrollment.

There are two formats of dissertations that you may complete to fulfill SISLT requirements: the traditional (one “large” study) dissertation or the three-article dissertation. You and your chosen dissertation advisor must agree up on the dissertation format you will complete. Details on each follow.

Dissertation – Traditional – Proposal and Overall Contents

A traditional dissertation is a book-length project that investigates one or more specific research projects and presents that investigation as a unified whole work.

Traditional Dissertation Proposal

Your dissertation **proposal** is intended to demonstrate to your committee that you are prepared to conduct research and write the dissertation. Your dissertation committee must approve your conceptualization, argument, and methodology before you begin data collection.

Note:

You will be required to schedule a dissertation proposal meeting with your dissertation committee prior to beginning to collect data for your dissertation research. The proposal meeting is open to all faculty and students in the School.

The dissertation proposal should include the first three chapters of your dissertation (Chapter 1: Rationale for the Study, Chapter 2: Literature Review, Chapter 3: Description of Methodology). Your advisor is your primary guide for putting together a solid proposal. While other members of your committee may provide advice in their areas of expertise, it is generally expected that you will work most closely with your advisor to make sure your proposal is ready for committee review. In particular, the quality of your research question’s motivation and identification of a gap in present research should be articulated early in Chapter one. Chapter two should contain a literature review the builds on the motivation in Chapter one and reviews other research pertinent to your question. Chapter three should define a research plan, methodology and data collection approach appropriately suited to your area of inquiry.

During the meeting, you will make a short presentation. The Committee will then discuss the relevance and efficacy of the arguments and methods stated. The Committee may approve the proposal for continuation or recommend revisions to be completed prior to approval. You may be required to significantly revise the proposal and even hold a second proposal meeting before proceeding with data collection.

When the Dissertation Committee has accepted your proposal, you are then expected to complete your study according to the three chapters written and approved in your proposal meeting. Changes to the study must be approved by your advisor and committee.

Note:

After successfully defending your proposal submit the SISLT Dissertation Proposal Prospectus Form (available on the SISLT PhD Resource page) form and a 3 – 5 page summary of your proposal to the SISLT Student Services Office.

Traditional Dissertation: Overall Contents

The final dissertation should include these first 3 chapters from your proposal plus – at a minimum – a Chapter 4 – Results and Chapter 5 – Discussion.

Three-Article Dissertation –Proposal and Overall Contents

A three-article dissertation is based on three publishable studies that represent a cohesive body of research on a single or closely related topics.

Three article Dissertation -- Proposal:

The written proposal for this type of dissertation should contain the following.

1. Explanation why the 3-article option is a better option for this student than a more traditional dissertation format
2. Inclusion of one article that was published or submitted for publication to a peer reviewed journal. This article will still be subject to the committee's "publishable" vote.
3. Abstracts and outline for two additional articles with indication of their submission timelines and peer reviewed journals where student intends to submit them (include indicators of journal or proceedings' quality). These outlines should be quite detailed.

At the time of proposal defense, a student presents a summary overview of items 1-3 and responds to committee's questions about the plans for research/publication. The committee reserves right to ask student to secure additional committee approval for conducting research that leads to papers #2 and #3, if it is not feasible to provide sufficient detail at the time of proposal defense.

Note:

After successfully defending your proposal submit the SISLT Dissertation Proposal Prospectus Form (available on the SISLT PhD Resource page) form and a 3 – 5 page summary of your proposal to the SISLT Student Services Office.

Three-Article Dissertation Contents

A completed three-article dissertation contains:

1. Introduction and background to the topic, which should include: A definition or statement of the problem, the importance, theoretical foundations, an overview of the most important literature, the research questions, and methodology
2. First paper
3. Second Paper
4. Third Paper
5. Conclusions and implications for policy and/or further research, including the major findings, limitations, links between the articles. The final chapter should tie everything together.

The three-article dissertation might also contain a separate literature review or other sections as determined necessary by the committee.

For this three-article dissertation, **publishable** means submitted to peer-reviewed journal, or peer-reviewed conference proceedings where the entire article is peer reviewed, not simply the abstract AND that the committee has agreed that the article in question is of “publishable” quality. Disagreements among committee members concerning whether the student's work is of 'publishable' quality will be decided by majority vote.

Authorship requirement: It is recommended that one of your papers be sole authored; all must be lead authored. You and your committee must agree on this at the time of the proposal meeting.

Copyright: Given that several chapters will be published articles, the student must obtain copyright permission to include the article in his/her dissertation (this is the law). Students must notify the journal / proceedings editor that the dissertation will be made available online; all MU dissertations are uploaded to the MU institutional repository (MOSpace). This should be considered early in the dissertation process, when selecting the journal. Look at the journal's open access policies and any funding required to republish it. If an article is rejected during the dissertation process, the committee must approve the journal the revisions and resubmission.

Dissertation Defense

After you have completed your dissertation draft (either format) and received your Dissertation Chair's approval, you may schedule your dissertation defense. A copy of your dissertation must be sent to each committee **member at least two weeks prior** to the defense meeting.

During the meeting, you will make a presentation of your dissertation research. The Dissertation Committee, other faculty, staff, and students may attend your dissertation defense and ask questions of you regarding your dissertation and your research. Audience members will be excused while the Dissertation Committee evaluates the dissertation and defense.

The Committee may approve the dissertation, approve the dissertation pending revisions, or fail the dissertation. For the dissertation to be successfully defended, the Dissertation Committee must vote to pass the dissertation, with no more than one dissenting or abstaining vote.

When you have successfully defended your dissertation and your committee has signed the D4 Dissertation Form, return the form to the SISLT Student Services Office.

You must follow the dissertation formatting guidelines specified by the Office of Graduate Studies. Consult the [Grad Studies Thesis/Dissertation Submission Checklist](#) as you prepare your final dissertation submission.

Then go out and celebrate!

Additional Resources

Travel and Data Collection Funds

Traveling to conferences to present papers or posters is an important part of your professional development. SISLT does have a fund for supporting graduate student travel. Check the SISLT web site to see how to apply for these funds.

We also have funding available to assist in offsetting costs you may have associated with your dissertation data collection or analysis (e.g., participant incentives). Again, check the SISLT web site for application details.

These funds are for your use – so apply for them! Contact your advisor with any questions about these funds.

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