Northcentral University

DOCTORAL STUDENT EXPERIENCE HANDBOOK
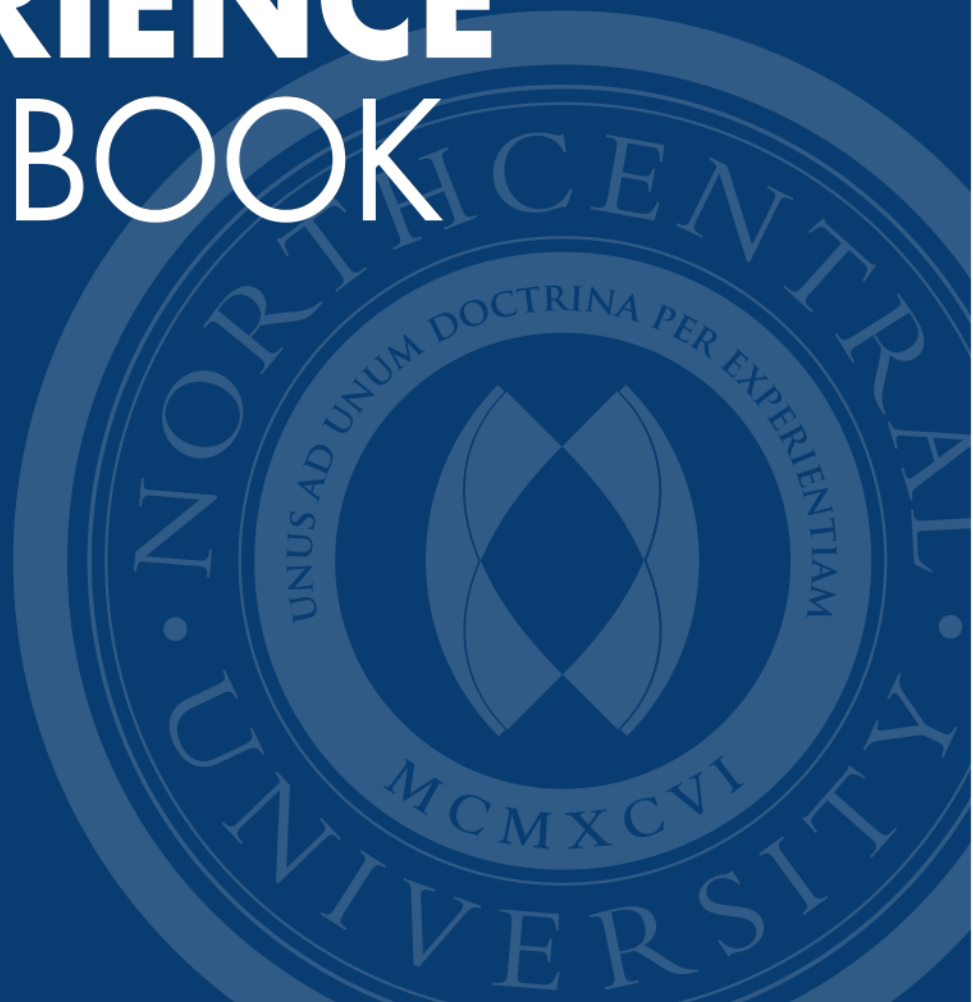
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Introduction

This guide (and the documents referenced within) is a resource outlining major elements of the Northcentral University dissertation process. Candidates and faculty members involved in research and dissertation courses are strongly encouraged to read this Doctoral Student Experience (DSE) Guide and associated documents (rubric and templates) before beginning work on a dissertation. The terms *Dissertation Chair* and *Chair* are used interchangeably within this document.

If you are a candidate and have questions not answered in this DSE Guide or in any of the supplemental materials, please speak to your Dissertation Chair (academic issues) or Academic and Finance Advisor (program or degree issues). Note: Candidates are responsible for staying current with changes to their program. Check with your Academic and Finance Advisor if you have questions about your program of study.

If you are a *faculty member* and have questions not answered in this DSE Guide or in the supplemental materials, please reach out to the Assistant/Associate Dean of faculty or Department Chair in your school.

Doctoral Candidates are doctoral students who have successfully passed their Comprehensive Examinations/ePortfolio/Prospectus course or end of program coursework as denoted in their Program curriculum outlined in the catalog. Candidates are encouraged to identify a researchable topic and their preliminary methods approach by the completion of program coursework. This process should be completed during the last course in a program's coursework. Based upon the identified topic and methodology, an appropriate Dissertation Chair and Subject Matter Expert (SME) will be aligned with the needs of each individual candidate and assigned accordingly.

Section 1: The Dissertation Process

The dissertation is the capstone accomplishment in the doctoral candidate's degree program. The PhD dissertation has a research focus, and the applied degree (e.g. DBA and EdD) is practice based. The doctoral dissertation is a substantial, scholarly work conducted independently by a candidate under the guidance of faculty members comprising the candidate's Doctoral Dissertation Committee. Committee roles include the Dissertation Chair, Subject Matter Expert (SME), and the Academic Reader (AR). More information on the Committee roles and responsibilities can be found in Section 2 of this guide. In the dissertation process, the candidate:

- Identifies a researchable problem substantiated through evidence.
- Summarizes, analyzes, and integrates recent (generally five years or less) scholarly literature and research relevant to the topic under study, and writes chapters 1, 2 and 3 of the Dissertation Proposal (DP)
- (Ultimately) Presents original research in an area related to their program and specialization. (While PhD dissertations contribute to the body of research, the applied doctorate dissertations typically contribute to practice).
- Receives NCU IRB approval to conduct research, collects and analyzes the data and reports the research findings in chapters 4 and 5 of the Dissertation Manuscript (DM).
- The final manuscript is comprised of five Chapters:
  - Chapter 1: Introduces the problem and the evidence substantiating the existence of the problem; outlines an initial review of literature on the study topic; articulates the purpose of the study; presents the research questions and theoretical foundation (PhD) or conceptual framework (EdD) and provides an overview of the research methods to be employed.
  - Chapter 2: Provides a detailed analysis of the theory/conceptual framework used in the study and a detailed synthesis of the available, current, scholarly literature on all aspects of the topic, including all points of view.
  - Chapter 3: Provides substantiation for the choice of methods and includes details on the planned research approach, design, and analysis.
  - Chapter 4: Presents the study findings.
  - Chapter 5: Summarizes the research study and presents the research implications and suggestions for future research.

The Dissertation process is generally divided into three broad stages: preparation and approval of the Dissertation Proposal (DP) which includes Chapters 1, 2, and 3; NCU IRB approval to conduct research and conducting the study's research; and preparation and approval of the final Dissertation Manuscript (DM) which includes all elements of the DP, with the addition of Chapters 4 and 5 to complete the manuscript including the dissertation defense.

The Dissertation process is arduous and iterative. As candidates proceed through the dissertation process, they will be required to understand and apply faculty/committee feedback. Successful engagement with faculty requires a high level of conceptual understanding. Dissertation Committee Members review and substantively evaluate work submitted by candidates. Regular, iterative reviews of dissertation sections and drafts are a common - and

important - practice in the process.

Dissertation Course Overview
After doctoral candidates have successfully passed the last course in their scheduled program coursework (e.g. Comprehensive Examination, ePortfolio, Prospectus), they will be enrolled into the dissertation course sequence. There are specific deliverables required for each course. Each course deliverable represents a portion of the overall dissertation process. In order to progress successfully into a subsequent dissertation course, each final deliverable must be completed and meet the minimum standards on the rubric assessment as completed by the committee.

Remember, scholarly research is iterative and non-linear (however uncomfortable this may be while you are going through the process). Making a change in a later version to correct an issue in a previous version may reveal new issues that need to be addressed in the subsequently, approved, version. Ultimately, Northcentral University wants all candidates to succeed, but we also have to ensure that our terminal outcomes meet quality standards. To that end, below are the steps of the Dissertation review process designed to facilitate candidate progress.

1. Northcentral University's Chairs and SMEs provide constructive feedback prior to the DP stage. This is to ensure the candidate has a feasible and realistic plan to develop a well-conceived, substantive, quality dissertation. Individual chapter reviews, throughout the development of the DP, serve to assess if the topic is appropriate and the planned research is sound and practical within the scope of a doctoral program. The Dissertation Proposal ensures the problem is substantiated with evidence, the research methods and design are in alignment and serve the purpose and address the problem of the topic under study. In addition, the proposal allows the candidate to complete an exhaustive review of current scholarly literature addressing all points of view on the topic under study including the theory or conceptual framework used to support the study.
2. The DP must meet the minimum standards on all rubric criteria assessed by the Dissertation Chair and Subject Matter Expert to proceed to the next course in the dissertation sequence and begin the NCU Institutional Review Board (IRB) application process.
3. Upon final approval of the DP, the candidate applies to NCU IRB for approval to collect data. <u>No data may be collected until IRB approval is obtained. Failure to observe this rule may result in dismissal from Northcentral University.</u>
4. Following IRB approval, the candidate conducts his/her research and writes the DM in the required manner. The DM is approved by the Dissertation Chair and SME. The approved DM is then sent to the AR for review against the checklist, which may result in the candidate having to make changes for improvement.
5. Upon final approval of the DM, the Oral Defense is scheduled. To pass this oral examination, the candidate must be able to explain and justify what was accomplished by the dissertation research.

Dissertation Course Sequence
The dissertation courses have been structured into discrete courses with specific deliverables at the end of each course. Additionally, each course requires weekly engagement between the candidate and the Chair through weekly assignment submissions, similar to the current coursework requirements. These weekly submissions are scaffolded to build the entire deliverable to meet the minimum standards of the

evaluation process by the end of the course. A few times throughout each course, candidates submit assignments to the Chair and SME, as noted in the syllabus, to receive feedback on these components based on the rubric criterion.

The dissertation sequence of courses has been designed to assist the candidate in scaffolding the development of the individual chapters of the dissertation in a timely and scholarly approach. There are four 12-week courses. The deliverables to be evaluated at the end of each course include:

> Dissertation course DIS-9901A – Chapter 1
> Dissertation course DIS-9902A – Chapter 2, Chapter 3, and final DP
> Dissertation course DIS-9903A – IRB approval, and final Study Closure Form after data are collected
> Dissertation course DIS-9904A – Chapter 4, Chapter 5, final DM, and Oral Defense

Candidates not meeting the minimum standards on the required deliverable at the end of the 12-week course will be assigned to an 8-week supplemental course. The 8-week supplemental course provides additional committee collaboration and support, University support, and a higher 'hands-on' process to expedite the candidate through the areas needing to be addressed in meeting the minimum standards for each deliverable. These supplemental courses also allow for candidates to continue to work on subsequent chapters and deliverables in advance of starting the next 12-week course once the minimum standards have been met on the current course requirements.

If the candidate does not meet the minimum criteria of the required course deliverable within the 8-week supplemental course, the candidate is allowed to retake the 8-week supplemental course two more times. The third retake of the original dissertation sequence course is the final opportunity for the candidate to meet the minimum standards for the required course deliverable.

Not meeting minimum standards on all rubric criteria for an end of course deliverable indicates candidates must progress to a supplemental course to work on the criterion. As a reminder, the iterative process in developing a dissertation may require the candidate go back and revise previously approved chapters before a final DP or DM can be approved. This must be reiterated to the candidate throughout the development of their dissertation.

In the following diagram, the dissertation course sequences are displayed. Each course sequence block has the required deliverable to meet minimum standards displayed to progress into the next course sequence block.

The table below illustrates the course sequence:
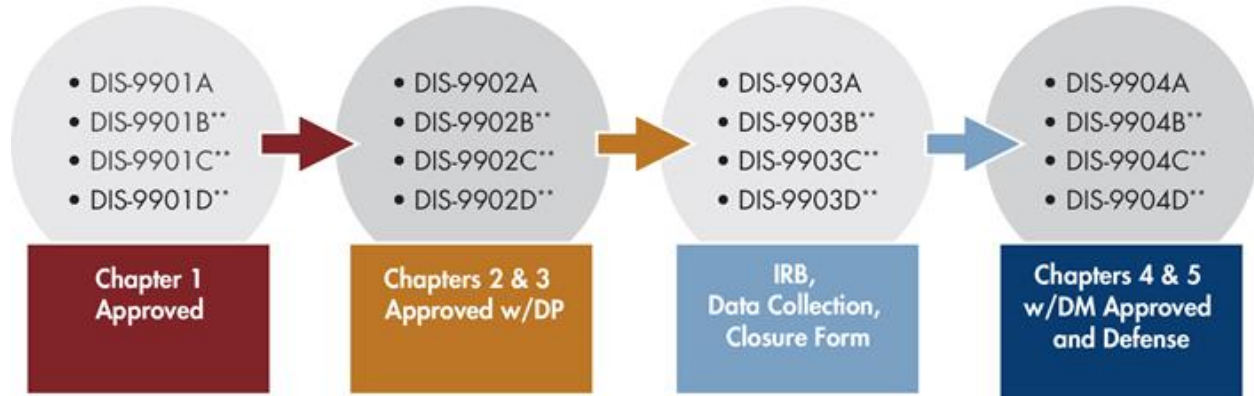
Candidates must complete a minimum of 12-credit hours of dissertation coursework with a grade of "B" or better to satisfy degree program requirements. Students may be eligible to overlap the last 3-credit hours in order to meet the minimum required dissertation credit hours after they have achieved an approved Chapter 5. Please see the catalog for additional information on specific degree program requirements. Candidates should contact their Academic and Finance Advisor if they need additional assistance

Dissertation 12-week course learning outcomes and descriptions
Below are the course descriptions and learning outcomes for the four 12-week courses.

DIS-9901A Components of the Dissertation
Students in this course will be required to complete Chapter 1 of their dissertation proposal including a review of literature with substantiating evidence of the problem, the research purpose and research questions, the intended methodological design and approach, and the significance of the study. A completed, committee approved (against the minimum rubric standards) Chapter 1 is required to pass this course successfully. Students who do not receive approval of Chapter 1 to minimum standards will be able to take up to three supplemental 8-week courses to finalize and gain approval of Chapter 1.

Course Learning Outcomes
1. Justify a research-worthy topic with current, relevant literature related to professional interests and chosen Doctoral degree.
2. Develop an evidence-based problem statement in need of further research, a related purpose statement, research question(s), or applicable hypotheses.
3. Formulate a research methodology and corresponding design to accurately address the study's research question(s) or applicable hypotheses.
4. Integrate a theoretical foundation/conceptual framework with which to ground the study.

DIS-9902A The Dissertation Proposal
Students in this course will be required to work on completing Chapters 1-3 of their dissertation proposal and receive committee approval for the Dissertation Proposal (DP) in order to pass the class. Chapter 2 consists of the literature review. Chapter 3 covers the research methodology method and design and to includes population, sample, measurement instruments, data collection and analysis, limitations, and ethical considerations. In this course, a completed, committee-approved Chapters 2 and 3 are required and, by the end of the course, a final approved dissertation proposal (against the minimum rubric standards). Students who do not receive approval of the dissertation proposal will be able to take up to three supplemental 8-week courses to finalize and gain approval of these requirements.

Course Learning Outcomes
1. Formulate an exhaustive, balanced, objective review of relevant and current literature relative to the discipline under study which will result in an approved Chapter 2.
2. Demonstrate mastery of the current research base relevant to the discipline under study.
3. Substantiate through current and seminal literature the relevant theoretical foundation/conceptual framework used to frame the study.
4. Formulate a detailed research design and methodology substantiating the alignment of the problem statement, purpose, research questions and/or hypotheses relevant to the discipline under study which will result in an approved Chapter 3.
5. Assemble all ancillary materials, appendices and references necessary to complete their dissertation proposal.

DIS-9903A Institutional Review Board (IRB) and Data Collection
Students in this course will be required to prepare, submit, and obtain approval of their IRB application, collect data, and submit a final study closure form to the IRB. Students still in data collection at the end of the 12-week course will be able to take up to three supplemental 8-week courses to complete data collection and file an IRB study closure form.

Course Learning Outcomes
1. Generate an IRB Application meeting federal requirements for ethical treatment of human subjects and all NCU IRB Guidelines.
2. Develop materials and procedures to meet all levels of required site permissions, including non-NCU IRB approval, and DoD, military, VA, or international approvals, as required.
3. Create appropriate materials and procedures for the ethical recruitment of participants, informed consent, data collection, de-identified data analysis, and secure data storage including reporting any modification or anomaly discovered throughout all phases of the research project until it has been closed with the IRB.
4. Conduct data collection upon approval of IRB Application.

DIS-9904A The Dissertation Manuscript and Defense

In this dissertation course students work on completing Chapters 4 and 5 and the final dissertation manuscript. Specifically, students will complete their data analysis, prepare their study results, and present their findings in an oral defense and a completed manuscript. A completed, committee approved (against the minimum rubric standards) Dissertation Manuscript and successful Oral Defense are required to complete the course and graduate. Students who do not receive approval for either or both their dissertation manuscript or defense can take up to three supplemental 8-week courses to finalize and gain approval of either or both items as needed.

Course Learning Outcomes
1. Present study results aligned to the research design including the research questions and/or hypotheses, ensuring aligned with the doctoral degree discipline.
2. Compile study implications, recommendations, and conclusions based on study findings.
3. Generate a final Dissertation Manuscript consisting of all requisite components and revisions.
4. Synthesize research study and design, findings, recommendations, and conclusions in oral defense of their completed study.

An overview of the four 12-week courses and weekly expectations can be found in the individual course syllabi.

Dissertation 8-week course learning outcomes and descriptions

An overview of the eight 8-week courses and weekly expectations can be found in the individual course syllabi.

DIS-9901B Components of the Dissertation Supplemental

Students enrolled in this course are required to complete Chapter 1 of their dissertation proposal, which includes the research problem to be investigated, its background the study's purpose, and supporting evidence for the study's significance. A completed, committee- approved (against the minimum rubric standards) Chapter 1 is required before student may advance to DIS-9902A. Students who do not receive approval of Chapter 1 will take DIS-9901C to finalize and gain approval of Chapter 1.

Course Learning Outcomes
1. Justify a research-worthy topic with current, relevant literature related to professional interests and chosen Doctoral degree.
2. Develop an evidence-based problem statement in need of further research, a related purpose statement, research question(s), or applicable hypotheses.
3. Formulate a research methodology and corresponding design to accurately address the study's research question(s) or applicable hypotheses.
4. Integrate a theoretical foundation/conceptual framework with which to ground the study.

DIS-9902B The Dissertation Proposal Supplemental
Students enrolled in this course will be required to complete Chapters 1-3 of their dissertation proposal and receive committee approval for the Dissertation Proposal (DP). Chapter 2 consists of the literature review. Chapter 3 covers the research methodology to include population, sample, measurement instruments, data collection and analysis, limitations, and ethical considerations. In this course, a completed, committee approved Chapters 2 and 3 are required in addition to a completed, approved dissertation proposal (against the minimum rubric standards) before students may move to DIS-9903A. Students who do not receive approval of the dissertation proposal will be enrolled in DIS-9902C to finalize and gain approval of these requirements.

Course Learning Outcomes
1. Formulate an exhaustive, balanced, objective review of relevant and current literature relative to the discipline under study which will result in an approved Chapter 2.
2. Demonstrate mastery of the current research base relevant to the discipline under study.
3. Substantiate through current and seminal literature the relevant theoretical foundation/conceptual framework used to frame the study.
4. Formulate a detailed research design and methodology substantiating the alignment of the problem statement, purpose, research questions and/or hypotheses relevant to the discipline under study which will result in an approved Chapter 3.
5. Assemble all ancillary materials, appendices and references necessary to complete their dissertation proposal.

DIS-9903B Institutional Review Board (IRB) and Data Collection Supplemental
Students enrolled in this course will be required to prepare, submit, and obtain approval of their IRB application, collect data, and submit a final study closure form to the IRB. They then will be enrolled in DIS-9904A. Students still in data collection at the end of this course will be enrolled in DIS-9903C to complete data collection and file a study closure form.

Course Learning Outcomes:
1. Generate an IRB Application meeting federal requirements for ethical treatment of human subjects and all NCU IRB Guidelines.
2. Develop materials and procedures to meet all levels of required site permissions, including non-NCU IRB approval, and DoD, military, VA, or international approvals, as required.
3. Create appropriate materials and procedures for the ethical recruitment of participants, informed consent, data collection, de-identified data analysis, and secure data storage including reporting any modification or anomaly discovered throughout all phases of the research project until it has been closed with the IRB.
4. Conduct data collection upon approval of IRB Application.
5. Synthesize collected data to begin analyzing results.

DIS-9904B The Dissertation Manuscript and Defense Supplemental
Students enrolled in this course will work on completing Chapters 4 and 5 and the final dissertation manuscript. Specifically, students will complete their data analysis, prepare their study results, and present their findings in an oral defense and a completed manuscript. A completed, committee approved (against the minimum rubric standards) Dissertation Manuscript and Defense are required to complete the course and graduate. Students who do not receive approval for either or both of their dissertation manuscript or defense will be enrolled in DIS-9904C to finalize and gain approval of either or both items as needed.

Course Learning Outcomes
1. Present study results aligned to the research design including the research questions and/or hypotheses, ensuring aligned with the doctoral degree discipline.
2. Compile study implications, recommendations, and conclusions based on study findings.
3. Generate a final Dissertation Manuscript consisting of all requisite components and revisions.
4. Synthesize research study and design, findings, recommendations, and conclusions in oral defense of their completed study.

DIS-9901C Components of the Dissertation Supplemental
Students enrolled in this course are required to complete Chapter 1 of their dissertation proposal, which includes the research problem to be investigated, its background the study's purpose, and supporting evidence for the study's significance. A completed, committee- approved (against the minimum rubric standards) Chapter 1 is required before student may advance to DIS-9902A. Students who do not receive approval of Chapter 1 will take DIS-9901D to finalize and gain approval of Chapter 1.

Course Learning Outcomes
1. Justify a research-worthy topic with current, relevant literature related to professional interests and chosen Doctoral degree.
2. Develop an evidence-based problem statement in need of further research, a related purpose statement, research question(s), or applicable hypotheses.
3. Formulate a research methodology and corresponding design to accurately address the study's research question(s) or applicable hypotheses.
4. Integrate a theoretical foundation/conceptual framework with which to ground the study.

DIS-9902C The Dissertation Proposal Supplemental
Students enrolled in this course will be required to complete Chapters 1-3 of their dissertation proposal and receive committee approval for the Dissertation Proposal (DP). Chapter 2 consists of the literature review. Chapter 3 covers the research methodology to include population, sample, measurement instruments, data collection and analysis, limitations, and ethical considerations. In this course, a completed, committee approved Chapters 2 and 3 are required in addition to a completed, approved dissertation proposal (against the minimum rubric standards) before students may move to DIS-9903A.
Students who do not receive approval of the dissertation proposal will be enrolled in DIS-9902D to finalize and gain approval of these requirements.

Course Learning Outcomes
1. Formulate an exhaustive, balanced, objective review of relevant and current literature relative to the discipline under study which will result in an approved Chapter 2.
2. Demonstrate mastery of the current research base relevant to the discipline under study.
3. Substantiate through current and seminal literature the relevant theoretical foundation/conceptual framework used to frame the study.
4. Formulate a detailed research design and methodology substantiating the alignment of the problem statement, purpose, research questions and/or hypotheses relevant to the discipline under study which will result in an approved Chapter 3.
5. Assemble all ancillary materials, appendices and references necessary to complete their dissertation proposal.

DIS-9903C Institutional Review Board (IRB) and Data Collection Supplemental
Students enrolled in this course will be required to prepare, submit, and obtain approval of their IRB application, collect data, and submit a final study closure form to the IRB. They then will be enrolled in DIS-9904A. Students still in data collection at the end of this course will be enrolled in DIS-9903D to complete data collection and file a study closure form.

Course Learning Outcomes
1. Generate an IRB Application meeting federal requirements for ethical treatment of human subjects and all NCU IRB Guidelines.
2. Develop materials and procedures to meet all levels of required site permissions, including   non-NCU IRB approval, and DoD, military, VA, or international approvals, as required.
3. Create appropriate materials and procedures for the ethical recruitment of participants, informed consent, data collection, de-identified data analysis, and secure data storage including reporting any modification or anomaly discovered throughout all phases of the research project until it has been closed with the IRB.
4. Conduct data collection upon approval of IRB Application.
5. Synthesize collected data to begin analyzing results.

DIS-9904C The Dissertation Manuscript and Defense Supplemental
Students enrolled in this course will work on completing Chapters 4 and 5 and the final dissertation manuscript. Specifically, students will complete their data analysis, prepare their study results, and present their findings in an oral defense and a completed manuscript. A completed, committee approved (against the minimum rubric standards) Dissertation Manuscript and Defense are required to complete the course and graduate. Students who do not receive approval for either or both of their dissertation manuscript or defense will be enrolled in DIS-9904D to finalize and gain approval of either or both items as needed.

Course Learning Outcomes

1. Present study results aligned to the research design including the research questions and/or hypotheses, ensuring aligned with the doctoral degree discipline.
2. Compile study implications, recommendations, and conclusions based on study findings.
3. Generate a final Dissertation Manuscript consisting of all requisite components and revisions.
4. Synthesize research study and design, findings, recommendations, and conclusions in oral defense of their completed study.

DIS-9901D Components of the Dissertation Supplemental

Students enrolled in this course are required to complete Chapter 1 of their dissertation proposal, which includes the research problem to be investigated, its background the study's purpose, and supporting evidence for the study's significance. A completed, committee- approved (against the minimum rubric standards) Chapter 1 is required before student may advance to DIS-9902A. Students still in data collection at the end of this course will be removed from the program.

Course Learning Outcomes

1. Justify a research-worthy topic with current, relevant literature related to professional interests and chosen Doctoral degree.
2. Develop an evidence-based problem statement in need of further research, a related purpose statement, research question(s), or applicable hypotheses.
3. Formulate a research methodology and corresponding design to accurately address the study's research question(s) or applicable hypotheses.
4. Integrate a theoretical foundation/conceptual framework with which to ground the study.

DIS-9902D The Dissertation Proposal Supplemental

Students enrolled in this course will be required to complete Chapters 1-3 of their dissertation proposal and receive committee approval for the Dissertation Proposal (DP). Chapter 2 consists of the literature review. Chapter 3 covers the research methodology to include population, sample, measurement instruments, data collection and analysis, limitations, and ethical considerations. In this course, a completed, committee approved Chapters 2 and 3 are required in addition to a completed, approved dissertation proposal (against the minimum rubric standards) before students may move to DIS-9903A. Students still in data collection at the end of this course will be removed from the program.

Course Learning Outcomes

1. Formulate an exhaustive, balanced, objective review of relevant and current literature relative to the discipline under study which will result in an approved Chapter 2.
2. Demonstrate mastery of the current research base relevant to the discipline under study.
3. Substantiate through current and seminal literature the relevant theoretical foundation/conceptual framework used to frame the study.
4. Formulate a detailed research design and methodology substantiating the

alignment of the problem statement, purpose, research questions and/or hypotheses relevant to the discipline under study which will result in an approved Chapter 3.
5. Assemble all ancillary materials, appendices and references necessary to complete their dissertation proposal.

DIS-9903D Institutional Review Board (IRB) and Data Collection Supplemental
Students enrolled in this course will be required to prepare, submit, and obtain approval of their IRB application, collect data, and submit a final study closure form to the IRB. They then will be enrolled in DIS-9904A. Students still in data collection at the end of this course will be removed from the program.

Course Learning Outcomes:
1. Generate an IRB Application meeting federal requirements for ethical treatment of human subjects and all NCU IRB Guidelines.
2. Develop materials and procedures to meet all levels of required site permissions, including non-NCU IRB approval, and DoD, military, VA, or international approvals, as required.
3. Create appropriate materials and procedures for the ethical recruitment of participants, informed consent, data collection, de-identified data analysis, and secure data storage including reporting any modification or anomaly discovered throughout all phases of the research project until it has been closed with the IRB.
4. Conduct data collection upon approval of IRB Application.
5. Synthesize collected data to begin analyzing results.

DIS-9904D The Dissertation Manuscript and Defense Supplemental
Students enrolled in this course will work on completing Chapters 4 and 5 and the final dissertation manuscript. Specifically, students will complete their data analysis, prepare their study results, and present their findings in an oral defense and a completed manuscript. A completed, committee approved (against the minimum rubric standards) Dissertation Manuscript and Defense are required to complete the course and graduate. Students still in data collection at the end of this course will be removed from the program.

Course Learning Outcomes
1. Present study results aligned to the research design including the research questions and/or hypotheses, ensuring aligned with the doctoral degree discipline.
2. Compile study implications, recommendations, and conclusions based on study findings.
3. Generate a final Dissertation Manuscript consisting of all requisite components and revisions.
4. Synthesize research study and design, findings, recommendations, and conclusions in oral defense of their completed study.

Dissertation Template
A template, formatted to APA standards, is available for use by candidates. Differentiation is noted throughout the document for completing an applied (EdD and DBA) or research (PhD) dissertation. Candidates should only use this template to complete their dissertation course deliverables. Remember, Candidates are to remove the explanation sections of the template when developing their work.

DSE Dissertation Grading
Candidates must submit something every week in their dissertation course for their Chair to review. Each course contains Committee reviews for candidates to submit the assigned deliverable. Multiple times throughout the courses this deliverable will be reviewed by the Chair and SME against the stated rubric criteria in the Doctoral Record. The final submitted deliverable(s) for the course must receive the minimum passing score of 'meets' for all rubric criteria to receive a passing course grade (A or B). If any one of the criteria reflects 'does not meet', the candidate receives a 'C' for the course and will be enrolled in the associated 8-week supplemental course. Students who have not made any academic progress as determined by faculty and have not made any Doctoral Record submissions to grade using the rubric may be awarded an 'F' as the final grade. Students receiving an 'F' would be enrolled in the associated 8-week supplemental course. The Chair will make the determination between A or B by using an additional Final Grade rubric in the dissertation course that considers items such as communication with Chair and response to feedback, weekly coursework performance and progress, and scholarly writing.

The supplemental course allows the candidate additional time to complete the expected deliverable(s) to meet minimum rubric criteria for the dissertation course. In order to receive a passing score in the supplemental course the candidate must receive the minimum acceptable criteria on the rubric, assessed by the Chair and SME. If the candidate receives a 'C' or 'F' in the first supplemental course (DIS-990xB), they will be allowed to take supplemental courses (DIS-990xC & D) to satisfactorily complete the course deliverable(s). Any candidate who receives 'C' or 'F' grades in all supplemental courses (DIS-990xB, C, &D) will not be eligible to enroll in additional courses and will be subject to dismissal from the University.

Dissertation Deliverable Rubric
A rubric has been developed for all individual Chapters (1-5), the Dissertation Proposal (DP), and the Dissertation   Manuscript (DM). Course grades will be determined by the rubric for DIS-9901X (Chapter 1 meeting minimum criteria),   DIS-9902X (Dissertation Proposal meeting minimum criteria), and DIS-9904X (Dissertation Manuscript meeting minimum   criteria). Grading will be completed by the Chair and the Subject Matter Expert (SME) and the final scores will be reconciled to determine the final grade. The individual Chapter rubrics are in the courses and in the Doctoral Record. The Doctoral Record will be used as the evaluation tool for assessing student work by the Committee. The final DP and DM will be read by the Academic Reader (AR) and comments and suggestions from the AR should be incorporated into the final papers under the direction of the Chair.

The rubrics are to be used to evaluate the work completed for Dissertation Manuscript against institutional expectation   criteria. Candidates should use the rubrics to self-evaluate their work before submitting to their Chair and Committee. All   criteria must be designated as 'Meets' in order for a successful grade to be achieved.

The nature of the dissertation may require revisions to previously approved Chapters to better align with changes made in   subsequent Chapters. The five Chapters (1, 2, 3, 4, and 5) will

not be considered as final until a Committee approved   (meeting minimum criteria) Dissertation Manuscript has been completed.

The Dissertation Proposal and the Dissertation Manuscript will be automatically submitted to TurnItIn in the Doctoral Record for originality before the Manuscript can be   considered final. Target originality should be below 15% (excluding references, TOC, and template criteria). The final   manuscript will be read by a full-time faculty member (Academic Reader - AR) for methods and findings quality, rigor, and   alignment to institutional guidelines. Changes may be requested from the AR to improve upon key manuscript   components.

Be sure to visit the Dissertation Center for the current rubrics.

Using the Deliverable Rubric
Each rubric has specific criteria outlined based on the submitted deliverable. There are criteria are weighted 'Meets' and 'Does Not Meet'. Students are graded (for A or B grades) based only on the criterion allowing the scoring of a 'Meets' on all rubric criteria for final course deliverable.

The grading scale includes an 'A', 'B', or 'C', or F.

> Any reconciled rubric scoring a single 'Does Not Meet' and the deliverable will be considered as not passing and the course grade must be marked as a 'C' grade and the student will be enrolled in the 8-week supplemental course DIS-990XB/C/D.

> If the deliverable has been scored with a 'Meets' on all rubric criteria, the course grade will be marked as an 'A' or 'B' and the student will move on to the next DIS-990XA course in the dissertation sequence.

> If no progress on any of the required components has been demonstrated or communicated, the course will be graded as 'F' and the student will be enrolled in the next in the 8-week supplemental course DIS-990XB/C/D.

Final course grades are not to be submitted before the last day of the course and must be submitted by COB MST on the Thursday following the course completion.

The University awards letter grades in recognition for academic performance in each course. Grade points are assigned to each academic performance grade, with the exception of S, U, R, and RD grades and are used to calculate a Grade Point Average (GPA) for each candidate.

Submission Timeframes for Faculty Feedback
The dissertation course structure requires candidates to turn in an assignment every week. Assignment deadlines are Sunday at midnight, Mountain Standard Time. Candidates will upload their work in the Dropbox of each week. Chairs will access the paper and download it from the Dropbox. Chairs will provide feedback within the document and upload it in the Dropbox within the stated guidelines for feedback timeframes.

Candidates failing to submit assignments weekly will be identified as 'at-risk' (missing two weeks in a row) by the Chair which may result in outreach by the Academic and Finance Advisor, School designee, or other University representative. Course, institutional, or other consequences may be instituted for candidates' failure to follow academic submission and

course requirements.

Chairs have 7 calendar days to provide feedback to candidates on weekly submissions. Chairs and Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) have 7 calendar days to return feedback on work submitted in the Doctoral Record.   The exceptions to this rule include full Chapter 2 submissions in the Doctoral Record, the submission of the Dissertation Proposal in the Doctoral Record, and the Dissertation Manuscript in the Doctoral Record all which allow a 14-day turnaround time for feedback in the Doctoral Record.

Final course grades should be submitted by the Thursday following the last day of the course in order to allow for continuous enrollments for students. Chairs should know (for the most part) how a student is performing based on previous submissions in the Doctoral Record and from feedback from the SME and should submit the appropriate grade. Assignments submitted after the course end date will not be included in the end of course grade.

Doctoral Record turnaround times (calendar – midnight Sunday submission MST*)
>Chapter 1 (7 days)
>Chapter 2 (14 days)
>Chapter 3 (7 days)
>Dissertation Proposal Draft (14 days)
>Final Dissertation Proposal AR (14 days)
>IRB Approval Form (7 days)
>IRB Closure /NHSR Closure (7 days)
>Chapter 4 (7 days)
>Chapter 5 (7 days)
>Dissertation Manuscript Draft (14 days)
>Dissertation Oral Defense (7 days)
>Final Dissertation Manuscript AR (14 days)

Doctoral Record Submissions
Twice in every course, all work completed throughout the dissertation courses should be submitted to the Doctoral Record for review by the Chair and the SME. The Chair and the SME will use the rubric to evaluate each component of the submitted document. The completed rubric and edited document will be submitted back into the Doctoral Record by the Chair and SME. The Chair will then reconcile the scores. All criteria on the rubric must be marked as 'Meets' by the Committee in order for the candidate to move onto the next dissertation course in the sequence following completion of their current course. The final draft of the DP and DM will be submitted to the AR by the Chair to be reviewed against a checklist of University criteria in the Doctoral Record once the document has passed all the rubric criteria by the Chair and the SME.

The suggested Doctoral Record submission timeframes are noted throughout the syllabi of the courses. Additional submissions can occur if the candidate completes a deliverable, and the Chair believes the deliverable is ready for evaluation by the Committee. A student should submit a course deliverable no later than week 5 of a 12-week course and week 2 of an 8-week course in order to obtain feedback against the rubric criteria by all Committee Members. The rubric has been developed for all Chapters, the Proposal, the Manuscript, and front and back matter.

Candidates are reminded while their submitted documents are being evaluated they are expected to continue conducting appropriate activities to advance their research. Resources

and next steps are outlined in all the doctoral courses. Candidates are expected to continue working on subsequent Chapter components advancing their work towards a timely completion. Doctoral research is an ongoing, iterative learning process requiring extensive and continual effort. All available information for progressing through   the doctoral dissertation courses are in the dissertation courses, allowing the candidate to work ahead while the Committee works on evaluating the current paper.

Section 2: The Dissertation Committee

Dissertation Committee Composition

The Dissertation Committee provides a candidate with the direction, guidance, support, and feedback needed to complete all phases and chapters of the dissertation. The Dissertation Committee consists of three Northcentral University faculty members. The Dissertation Chair has significant expertise in research processes, procedures, methodology, and proficiency in guiding the candidate through the dissertation process. The second Committee member serves in the role of Subject Matter Expert (SME) bringing expertise in the field of study while also supporting the candidate in any methods approach.

The Academic Reader (AR) has expertise in research methods and familiarity with the field of study and ensures the dissertation aligns to University standards of academic integrity, rigor, research methods, and quality. This model allows continued support to candidates throughout the development of their dissertation components, even during times of Committee time off.

Chair	Subject Matter Expert (SME)	Academic Reader (AR)
The Chair works with students in each of your Dissertation Courses and guides students toward completion, serving as a mentor and consult. The Dissertation Chair is available via phone calls, Skype conversations, and emails.	The SME reviews work that students submit to the Doctoral Record (at least twice per course). The SME uses the rubric to evaluate work and provides feedback to assist students on their dissertation journey.	The Academic Reader reviews the Dissertation Proposal (DP) and Dissertation Manuscript (DM) when submitted to the Doctoral Record. The AR uses the rubric to evaluate student work and provides feedback to assist students on their dissertation journey.

The DSE sequence of courses requires the Chair and the SME to apply their methodological expertise to every course to support the candidate through their doctoral journey. The AR will perform a review, at transitional points and through consultation as needed, ensuring compliance to both methodological rigor and University scholarship standards, allowing a more streamlined and systematic approach to the completion of the dissertation.

The required qualifications of the Dissertation Chair, SME, and AR are as follows:

Chair of Dissertation Committee	• Expertise in research processes, methods, and approaches and proficiency in guiding the dissertation process • Successful completion of a dissertation and terminal degree from a regionally accredited institution • Demonstrated record of research and doctoral level teaching • Publications in peer reviewed or scholarly journals, books, edited, or otherwise
Member of Dissertation Committee (Subject Matter Expert - SME)	• Academic preparation and proficiency within the field of study for their assigned candidates • Solid understanding in research processes, methodologies, and experience in supporting candidates through completion of their dissertation • Successful completion of a dissertation and terminal degree from a regionally accredited institution • Demonstrated record of research and/or doctoral level teaching and/or practical experience appropriate to the program and degree specialization
Academic Reader (AR)	• Full-time faculty member • Expertise with the methodology for their assigned candidates • Strong understanding of University research and dissertation guidelines, academic rigor requirements, and quality research processes • Successful completion of a dissertation and terminal degree from a regionally accredited institution • Demonstrated record of research and/or doctoral level teaching and/or practical experience appropriate to the program and degree specialization

Selection of Committee Members
All candidates who are enrolling in their first dissertation (DIS) course will be assigned a Dissertation Chair, a SME, and AR. The selection of a SME will depend on faculty knowledge, availability, and topic experience in the candidates' field of study. All committee members will be assigned by the disciplinary School.

Committee Responsibilities
The ultimate responsibility of the Chair of the Dissertation Committee is to determine whether the candidate has demonstrated the competencies required. The Chair is supported by the SME and AR in helping the candidate to complete their dissertation. Each member has a specific role in the dissertation committee, contributing to the success of the candidate.

The Committee Members support the candidate through the dissertation process. The SME engages and supports both the Chair and the candidate throughout each course in the dissertation sequence by serving as the subject matter expert as well as an additional

resource in verifying proper use of research methods, design, and procedures. The AR provides a quality check for key deliverables (the dissertation proposal (DP) and manuscript (DM)) and consultation for the other Committee Members as needed throughout the dissertation journey. The AR is not a gate-keeper to final deliverables but a reviewer to ensure alignment to University scholarship requirements, research methods, design, procedures, and scholarly expectations.

The AR will be responsible for reviewing the Proposal and Manuscript when considered final by the Committee through the use of a checklist in the Doctoral Record. The AR will go into the Doctoral Record and retrieve the final Proposal or Manuscript and review the document against a quality checklist to ensure compliance with the University's standards of academic rigor and quality in both scholarly writing and research design and approach. Documents with any AR feedback will be uploaded into the Doctoral Record by the AR with a completed checklist. Changes requested by the AR need to be discussed and revised in the documents by the candidate under direction of the Chair.

Specifically, the responsibilities of the committee members are included below.

The Dissertation Chair – (12-week courses):
- Primary arbiter of satisfactory candidate progress for dissertation deliverables;
- Directs a candidate's entire dissertation process and ensures all relevant policies, procedures, and standards are followed;
- Manages the course and course related activities and weekly deliverables;
- Ensures candidate completely aligns all work on the required, appropriate dissertation template;
- Expects weekly student participation as required for financial aid and University attendance requirements;
- Reports 'at-risk' student progress for missing two weekly submissions;
- Ensures proper and ethical application of research methods, design, procedures, and topic alignment throughout the dissertation process;
- Coordinates activities so that the work of the Dissertation Committee proceeds in a timely fashion (it is the responsibility of the Chair to ensure feedback from Committee Members is completed within the stated deadlines);
- Facilitates communication between candidate and Committee and the disciplinary School;
- Follows course syllabi in directing the candidate's weekly submissions as required;
- Provides substantial formative and summative feedback through the use of the appropriate dissertation rubric (detailed feedback is required for all areas not meeting minimum standards on the rubric);
- Reviews TurnItIn reports in the Doctoral Record for the Proposal and the Manuscript focusing on a goal of less than 15% originality; and
- Complies with the expectations articulated in the faculty handbook and appointment letter requirements.

The Dissertation Chair – (8-week supplemental courses):
The premise on the completion of the 8-week supplemental courses is the bulk of the actual deliverables have been completed and there are areas in need of special attention. Weekly deliverables are still expected in line with the course syllabus as noted by the Chair and are designed to support the development and refinement of key components as noted from the 12-week course. The exact same deliverables are expected to be completed at the end of these supplemental courses (from the associated 12-week course) with the support of

additional University resources as required by the Chair to meet minimum rubric standards and progress to the next 12-week dissertation course in the sequence.

- Primary arbiter of satisfactory candidate progress for dissertation deliverables;
- Directs a candidate's entire dissertation process and ensures that all relevant policies, procedures, research design and methods; and standards are followed;
- Expects weekly student participation as required for financial aid and University attendance requirements;
- Reports 'at-risk' student progress for missing two weekly submissions;
- Ensures candidate completes interventions as required by the Chair or Committee Members;
- Facilitates changes as required by committee members to meet minimum rubric standards;
- Manages course and course related activities and weekly deliverables;
- Ensures candidate completely aligns all work on the required, appropriate dissertation template;
- Completes rubric components as required;
- Reviews TurnItIn reports in the Doctoral Record for the Proposal and the Manuscript focusing on a goal of less than 15% originality; and
- Complies with the expectations articulated in the faculty handbook and appointment letter requirements.

The Subject Matter Expert (SME) - (12-week courses):
- Advises and supports the candidate as needed throughout the dissertation course sequence processes related to all areas of the dissertation process;
- Reviews and provides formative and summative written, constructive feedback of candidates' submissions through the use of the dissertation rubric for the requisite components as noted in the course syllabus (feedback is required for all areas of the paper not meeting minimum standards on the rubric);
- Ensures alignment to discipline specific approaches and that all points of view are addressed in the literature review through the development of topic depth; scope, currency, and relevance to the field;
- Maintains communication and responds to all messages sent by the Dissertation Chair or candidate within 48 hours;
- Participates in teleconferences or other interactive modes of communication when requested by the Dissertation Chair or the Dean (or designee) of the disciplinary School;
- Provides support specifically addressing rigor in methods, topic development, appropriate use of theoretical or conceptual context; and
- Complies with the expectations articulated in the faculty handbook and appointment letter requirements.

The Subject Matter Expert (SME) - (8-week supplemental courses):
The premise on the completion of the 8-week supplemental courses is that the bulk of the actual deliverables have been completed and there are areas in need of special attention. Weekly deliverables are still expected in line with the course syllabus as noted by the Chair and are designed to support the development and refinement of key components as noted from the 12-week course. The exact same deliverables are expected to be completed at the end of these supplemental courses (from the associated 12-week course) with the support of additional University resources as required by the Chair to meet minimum rubric standards and progress to the next 12-week dissertation course in the sequence.

- Advises and supports the candidate as needed throughout the dissertation course sequence processes related to all areas of the dissertation process;
- Provides support specifically addressing rigor in methods, topic development, appropriate use of theoretical or conceptual context;
- Checks alignment to discipline specific approaches and relevance to the field;
- Completes rubric components as required;
- Participates in teleconferences or other interactive modes of communication when requested by the Dissertation Chair or the Dean (or designee) of the content School;
- Reviews revisions made by candidate as requested;
- Supports the candidate throughout any time off taken by the Chair; and
- Complies with the expectations articulated in the faculty handbook and appointment letter requirements.

The Academic Reader (AR):
- Reviews and provides written, constructive feedback both formative and summative of candidates' submissions through the use of a checklist (feedback is required for all areas in need of improvement);
- Provides a review of the final draft (Chair and SME indicate the deliverable meets the minimum standards of all criteria of the rubric) of the Dissertation Proposal and Dissertation Manuscript (courses 2 and 4);
- Reviews the final drafts, with an eye towards approval, focusing on evidence of the problem, alignment of methods, ethical research guidelines and procedures, conformance to University policies, scholarly rigor, template guidelines, and rubric criteria;
- Provides support, as needed, to the Chair or SME in addressing any concerns or issues related to the development of the dissertation course sequence deliverables;
- Maintains communication and responds to all messages sent by the Dissertation Chair within 48 hours;
- Complies with the expectations articulated in the faculty handbook and appointment letter requirements; and
- Completes the time allocation sheet for tracking and data decisions for all interactions with candidates or the other committee members.

Working with a Committee
All communication among candidates and Committee Members must be timely, open, and honest. All concerned should maintain positive, respectful, and professional relationships.

The candidate must take responsibility to notify their Chair of any and all academic concerns prior to notifying anyone else in the institution. If the Chair has not been notified, the concern will not be considered. Examples of academic issues include, but are not limited to: document contents, structure and format; results of reviews by SMEs and ARs; alignment of SMEs to candidate discipline or topic; and, changing degree program track.

Candidates and their Dissertation Chairs should communicate regularly with one another using NCU provided communication tools. Chairs may also choose to communicate with candidates via telephone, teleconference, or videoconference. All communications outside the NCU learning management system or communication tools must be documented by the Dissertation Chair in the course and/or other NCU systems as appropriate.

Changes in Committee Assignments

Candidates may request to replace a Committee Member only in unusual situations and only after consulting with their Academic and Finance Advisor. Candidates must contact their Academic and Finance Advisor to discuss the process to change a Committee Member. Prior to requesting any such change, candidates are expected to use conflict management strategies to resolve issues surrounding communication and feedback. The scholarly journey is an iterative process and although candidates may not always agree with feedback they are expected to listen actively, reflect, and pose clarifying questions to overcome normal communication and personality differences.

Given the length of time it takes to complete dissertation research; it is not unlikely a candidate will experience changes to their Committee during their program. If such changes do occur, the candidate's disciplinary school will work to make the transition as smooth and possible for the candidate. Such changes are not expected to negatively impact progress towards degree completion.

In all situations involving requests for Committee changes, the decision of the Dean of the candidate's disciplinary School (or designee) as to what is in the candidate's best interest is final.

Section 3: Considerations and Policies
(Refer to the NCU Catalog for most current information and specific policy language)

Time Limits
For current time limits, please review the Satisfactory Academic Progress policy in the NCU Catalog.

Academic Integrity
Northcentral University's reputation depends on an uncompromising commitment to standards of academic integrity. The Northcentral University Academic Integrity Policy, to which all candidates and faculty members are bound, is available in the NCU Catalog and in the University Services Module in NCUOne.

Doctoral candidates are expected to follow the highest standards of professional ethics, intellectual honesty, and academic integrity. All work submitted to a faculty member in any course is subject to originality confirmation. Faculty members have the responsibility to reject work that fails to meet the standards outlined in the Northcentral University Academic Integrity Policy.

Northcentral University dissertation-related work is checked to ensure they meet Northcentral University standards of Academic Integrity. Plagiarism, misrepresentation, or fabrication of information or research results will not be tolerated and may be grounds for immediate dismissal from the University.

Code of Conduct
All members of the Northcentral University community are bound by the Northcentral University Code of Conduct (COC) contained in the current Northcentral University Course Catalog and thus are expected to act in a professional manner at all times.

<u>Failure to adhere to the COC may lead to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal from NCU</u>.

Satisfactory Academic Progress
For additional information regarding Satisfactory Academic Progress, please review the Satisfactory Academic Progress policy in the Catalog.

Minimum Passing Grades
The University considers the following to be the minimum passing grade by dissertation course-level:

Doctoral Sequence *(CMP9600+ <u>and</u> DIS9901A+)*	B = 3.00

NOTE: Doctoral candidates are required to have a minimum of a 3.0 GPA before entering into CMP courses (comprehensive exam, portfolio, or prospectus).

Assignment Deadlines and Final Course Grades
Assignments submitted after the course end date will not be graded and calculated in the final grade for the course.

Incomplete Grades
Candidates may request an incomplete grade extension if they meet the following requirements:
- An unforeseen circumstance threatens a student's ability to complete a course by the scheduled course end date.
- The student has completed 75% of the course
- The student has a "C" average for the assignments submitted thus far
- The student is earning a passing grade in the course at the time the "I" grade is requested

NOTE: The following Doctoral courses are not eligible for an incomplete grade:
- CMP course prefixes
- DIS-9901A/B/C; DIS-9902A/B/C; DIS-9903A/B/C; DIS-9904A/B/C

Incomplete grade extension requests are submitted to faculty for review. Faculty may approve a request at their discretion if candidates meet the eligibility criteria listed above. Incomplete grade request decisions are final and cannot be appealed.

ADA Course Accommodations
Candidates receiving ADA accommodations that extend their original course completion date are also eligible for Dean approved course modifications and incomplete grade extensions beyond approved ADA accommodation date.

Unsatisfactory Grades for Dissertation Courses
- **DIS-9901A-9904D** – Candidates who are unable to earn a grade of "B" or better by the fourth course within in a dissertation block (DIS-9901, DIS-9902, DIS-9902, and DIS-9904) are subject to dismissal from the University.

Repeating Doctoral Sequence Courses
Candidates enrolled in course codes CMP9600 through CMP9799 and DIS-9901A through DIS-9904C may be eligible to earn a repeated Doctoral Sequence ("RD") grade for courses that were originally completed with a non-passing grade of "C" or "F" if subsequent attempts are completed with a "B" or better. Courses awarded an "RD" grade will not be used in GPA calculations. Some courses may not be eligible for a repeated dissertation grade; candidates should work with their Academic and Finance Advisor to determine course repeat eligibility.

NOTE: A dissertation block consists of a 12-week dissertation course (DIS-990XA) and three 8-week supplemental courses (DIS-990XB, DIS-990XC, and DIS-990XD). For non-passing grades to be replaced, candidates must successfully complete the dissertation block with a grade of "B" or better by the end of the third supplemental dissertation course (DIS-990XD).

Maximum "RD" Grade Policy for Doctoral Sequence
A candidate may utilize the "RD" grade a maximum of ten times during the Doctoral Sequence (CMP9600+ and DIS-9901A+). Dean permission is needed prior to attempting the CMP course for a third and final time. During the dissertation, a candidate will be allowed a maximum of two RD grades per dissertation block.