



School for Conflict Analysis  
and Resolution

## S-CAR Dissertation Process

# The S-CAR Dissertation Process

## Doctoral Dissertation Overview

The dissertation is a written piece of original thinking that demonstrates doctoral candidates' mastery of subject matter, methodologies, and conceptual foundations in their chosen field of study. This is generally achieved through consideration of a problem on the boundaries of knowledge in the discipline.

## Registration

CONF 998- Dissertation Proposal (3-6 Credits)- After advancing to candidacy, doctoral students must register for CONF 998 until they receive approval of their dissertation proposal. Registration can be for 3 or 6 credits. Students must register for at least 3 credits of 998 a semester, some students will need to register for 6 credits a semester to maintain full time status for VISA or student loan requirements. Please check with Financial Aid or OIPS about your specific situation. PatriotWeb will use a default registration of 1 credit. Students registering for more than one credit should then adjust the number of credits in PatriotWeb.

CONF 999- Dissertation Research (1-6 credits) To enroll in CONF 999, students email the dissertation committee chair requesting the CRN number necessary for registration each semester. After the chair verifies that the student has completed the dissertation proposal, the CRN number is sent to the student by email. The student may then register online at <http://patriotweb.gmu.edu>. Students must register for at least 3 credits a semester of 999. Once a PhD student has taken 12 combined credits of 998 & 999- including at least 3 credits of CONF 999, the student can then register for just one credit a semester of 999. PatriotWeb will use a default registration of 1 credit. Students registering for more than one credit should then adjust the number of credits in PatriotWeb. Students registering for 1 credit of 999 or 999 and claiming full time equivalency are responsible for getting the [Full Time Equivalence Form](#) signed by their advisors and the Dean each semester and sending the completed form to Financial Aid. Registration for 999 courses requires having been advanced to candidacy; and having an appointed committee and an approved proposal.

## Dissertation Committee

Candidates should form their dissertation committee at the same time as they are working on their dissertation proposal. The Dissertation Committee must include a chair person from among S-CAR faculty, and at least two other members of the graduate faculty, one of whom must be a non-S-CAR, GMU faculty member. A list of GMU faculty who are part of the Institute's Faculty Advisory Committee and who have served on S-CAR dissertation committees, or indicated their willingness to do so, is available from the Ph.D. Coordinator. Candidates may ask to have more than three committee members if they so wish. A fourth member may be from GMU or another approved institution. S-CAR faculty are recommended to not take on more than 3 new dissertation committees in any given year, students should identify a variety of faculty who could provide assistance in case faculty have already reached their commitment limit.

The candidate should inform the Dean and Doctoral Director when a tentative committee has been formed. The membership of the committee must be approved by the Ph.D. Coordinator and the Dean of the School. The Dean will formally appoint the dissertation committee. The Dean will inform the student, committee members, and Doctoral Coordinator when the committee has been appointed.

## Dissertation Proposal

The first job of the committee is to approve the candidate's Dissertation Proposal. The proposal is the candidate's description (in some detail) of his/her dissertation project. It will include an argument about the hypothesis/theory question being tackled and the specific methods of research to be used. It should

be prepared in consultation with the chair of the committee, but must be seen and approved by all members. A signed cover page from that proposal must be filed with the Ph.D. Coordinator.

Failure to complete the formation of a Committee and an approved proposal by the end of the 12 month period will result in the candidate's dismissal from the doctoral program. (Candidates may appeal to the Dean for a further extension of this Dissertation Preparation period but such appeals will be allowed only on grounds of documented illness or family emergency).

The dissertation proposal does not need to follow any specific formatting guidelines. There is link at <http://thesis.gmu.edu/> to a template of a proposal signature sheet for faculty to indicate their approval of the proposal, but aside from the signature sheet, students may format as they and their committee wish. A copy of the proposal and signed cover sheet should be deposited with S-CAR student services for the student's file.

### **Proposal Presentation**

After receiving permission from the full committee, the candidate makes an oral presentation of the dissertation proposal before the committee and the doctoral coordinator that is also open to other S-CAR faculty, fellow students, and other scholars. In scheduling the presentation, it is the student's responsibility to ensure that all members of the committee are available and will be present for the presentation. The student is also responsible for scheduling the room and writing an e-mail to be distributed to the community one week prior to the presentation that includes the dissertation proposal title, date, time, and location of presentation, all committee members, and an abstract of not more than 100 words.

The candidate should speak for 15 or 20 minutes emphasizing the key questions, methodologies, and contributions of the proposed dissertation and then respond to questions. These presentations are not defenses of proposals but rather are opportunities for the larger academic community to help the candidate strengthen her or his proposal and prepare for research. The student's dissertation committee may request additional revisions to the proposal following the presentation.

### **Human Subjects Review Board**

Students completing a Dissertation must submit a copy of their proposal and all other necessary documents to the Human Subjects Review Board (HSRB), even if the dissertation research will not include research on human subjects.

\* The HSRB meets monthly to review applications. Monthly submission deadline are available on their web site.

\* Information on human subjects review, templates and forms are available on their web site.

### **Writing the Dissertation**

The chair of the dissertation committee usually takes most of the responsibility for guiding the overall project and the writing of the dissertation, although all members (and other useful persons) should be consulted as appropriate. It is their collective responsibility to ensure a quality piece of work.

When advanced to candidacy, the Guide for Preparing Graduate Thesis, Dissertations and Projects tells exactly how to prepare a physically acceptable dissertation (paper size, quality, margins, number of copies, etc.). The committee chair will work with the candidate on format and encourage submission of drafts or sample pages for preliminary review, and will welcome questions on format to avert expensive disasters due to format errors.

## **Scheduling a Dissertation Defense**

It is essential that doctoral committee members have sufficient time to read and evaluate dissertation drafts with care prior to the dissertation defense date. It is also essential that students have sufficient time after the defense to do final revisions, editing, and formatting. The University determines the deadlines for final library submission in order to graduate in any given semester. All defenses must be scheduled at least 30 days prior to this date and complete drafts of dissertations to be defended must be delivered to each member of the committee 30 days prior to the defense. In other words, if a student wishes to graduate in Spring of a given year and the university-determined submission deadline is May 1, the defense must take place prior to April 1 and the full draft dissertation must be delivered to the full committee before March 1.

The dissertation is to be orally defended in public, with at least the whole committee present. [The University may also send a representative, if it wishes.] However, anyone else is free to attend. This ensures that the University's standards are met, and offers an opportunity to all to hear the result of the work. After a successful defense, the cover page is signed by the members of the Dissertation Committee. Please see <http://scar.gmu.edu/library/10454> for steps required to schedule and prepare for your dissertation defense.

## **Dissertation Guidelines and Submission**

\* Students completing a dissertation should consult <http://thesis.gmu.edu> regularly to ensure they are meeting the appropriate GMU requirements. Templates are also available there to ensure proper formatting.

\* George Mason University requires strict adherence to the formats described in the online dissertation guide. All dissertations, theses, and projects must be reviewed by the University Dissertation and Thesis Coordinator prior to final submission. Please make an appointment with the University Dissertation and Thesis Coordinator, [udts@gmu.edu](mailto:udts@gmu.edu), to review formatting guidelines as soon as you have a workable draft.

\* For degree conferral, two copies with cover sheets signed by committee and Dean must be submitted to the library by 5:00 p.m. on the last Friday of classes in the term in which the student plans to graduate. In addition, one copy should be deposited in S-CAR's Burton Library.

## **University Dissertation and Thesis Services- Format and Submission Process**

### **Step One: Contact the Dissertation and Thesis Coordinator**

To have your dissertation reviewed, please contact the UDTS office in Fenwick Library at (703-993-2222) or e-mail at [udts@gmu.edu](mailto:udts@gmu.edu). Once you have contacted UDTS, you may e-mail a copy of your draft to [udts@gmu.edu](mailto:udts@gmu.edu). You will be contacted shortly after we receive your submission.

Please be sure that the copy has been initially formatted according to the Dissertation, Thesis, or Project Guide on our downloads page before submitting it for review.

UDTS staff will examine the manuscript for compliance with university format and appearance requirements. We will next set up a meeting to discuss important instructions for final submission. You will be given a format review sheet summarizing corrections, if any, you must make. If there are corrections, you are required to make the corrections to your new draft and re-submit it for review again.

When the manuscript fulfills the University format requirements, the UDTS staff will sign your Transmittal Sheet. You will need to include this sheet with your final submission. It is highly

recommended that you submit your work for format review (even if it is not your final version) as early as possible to avoid end-of-semester delays.

### **Step Two: Complete a Format Review**

Format Review is the process by which all GMU dissertations, theses, and projects are examined for compliance with University regulations for appearance. During the format review, the Dissertation and Thesis Coordinator examines the component parts of your manuscript (the preliminary pages, the body of your manuscript, figures and tables [if any], appendices, bibliography, and Curriculum Vitae). You are required to submit a copy of your thesis or dissertation (even if it is not the final version) to the Dissertation and Thesis Coordinator's office for format review.

### **Step Three: Defend**

Whether you undergo a formal defense or a less formal method of committee scrutiny and approval of your dissertation or thesis, you must remember the following:

- \* If you aren't sure whether you are doing a traditional or electronic submission (see step four) Prepare beforehand at least two (2) copies of the correctly-formatted signature sheet on 100% cotton bond paper for the members of your committee (and eventually the Dean for your unit) to sign.

- \* Provide black pen(s) for the committee members to use for signatures. All signatures must be in BLACK INK.

- \* Make sure all committee members sign your signature sheets.

- \* Make plans to have your Department Chair, Program Director (for dissertations only), and Dean sign them as well.

### **Step Four: Choose a Submission Method**

Beginning Fall 2007 students completing a dissertation, thesis, or project now have a choice in submission methods. Students can choose to follow the traditional paper based method or the new electronic option. These two methods will be discussed in detail with the Dissertation and Thesis Coordinator during the meeting after the format review.

### **Step Five: Submit Final Copies**

Once a student has chosen his or her preferred submission method final copies must be delivered to the library by the semester deadline.

These deadlines are set by the Registrar's Office. Generally, the deadline is 5 P.M. on the Friday before the last day of Spring Semester classes as published in the Schedule of Classes for May graduation and participation in Commencement Ceremony (though it may be two Fridays before), or 5 P.M. on the Friday before the last day of Summer Term or Fall Semester classes for August or January graduation, respectively. The deadline for the current semester can be found at the top of the home page for this site under News and Information.

### **S-CAR Dissertation Tips**

#### **The Earlier the Better**

Many students find themselves in a stressful situation trying to finish all of the dissertation requirements at the last minute. Give yourself plenty of time to submit a draft to your committee members but also give your committee members plenty of time to review your dissertation and make recommendations for

revising your work. Pay attention to University deadlines for format reviews, making appointments with the UDTS coordinator and final submission deadlines.

### **Communication is Key**

S-CAR Faculty have very different schedules and frequently travel, especially in the summer months. If you are planning on submitting your dissertation during the summertime, make sure that everyone on your dissertation committee is on the same page regarding review deadlines and timing expectations. It is up to the student to make sure they communicate with their dissertation committee about important meetings. The student is ultimately responsible to obtain all necessary signatures from the committee along with the S-CAR PhD Program Director and S-CAR Dean well before you submit your final copy. **Please do not wait until the final week before the dissertation deadline to obtain signatures.**

### **Pay Attention to Specific Guidelines**

S-CAR does not provide 100% cotton paper for dissertation submission. It is up to the student to purchase their own paper and print their own dissertation copies.

### **Important Web Sites**

GMU Thesis and Dissertation:

<http://thesis.gmu.edu>

HSRB meeting schedule: <http://research.gmu.edu/ORSP/HSRBMeetingSchedule.html>

HSRB forms and instructions:

<http://research.gmu.edu/ORSP/HumanFormsAndInstructions.html>

### **Once Dissertation is Approved, Signed and Submitted**

When the Dissertation Chair and Committee Members sign off on a doctoral dissertation, this is the committee's 100% approval of the final product symbolizing that they request no changes to be made. If a dissertation committee requests changes to be made, no members should be signing the signature pages. Once the dissertation is submitted to the GMU Library, this is the final document and it cannot be returned or edited post library submission.