



College of Education  
Learning Design and Leadership

*Exam-Dissertation Sequence:  
General Field Introduction*

# Reminder: EDS Purpose

**This six-step sequence includes a series of seminars and milestones that lead to four examinations and the design and writing of a traditionally, five-chapter dissertation, that is a rigorous, scholarly contribution to research in a field of interest.**



# Current Step: General Field

## Seminars

General Field  
EPOL 586

Special Field  
EPOL 587

Theory &  
Methodology  
EPOL 588

Preliminary Exam  
EPOL 591

Data Collection,  
Analysis, and  
Draft Dissertation  
EPOL 599

Final Defense  
& Deposit  
EPOL 599

## Milestones

General Field  
Literature Review

Special Field  
Literature Review

Theoretical  
Foundation

Methodology  
Selection

Implementation  
Plan

Research  
Proposal and  
Oral  
Examination

Data Collection,  
Analysis, and  
Draft  
Dissertation

Final  
Dissertation and  
Oral  
Examination

## Examinations

General Field  
Examination

Special Field  
Examination

Preliminary  
Examination

Final  
Examination

# Reminder: LDL Doctoral Dissertation Sequence Community

## *Complete all admin updates and projects within the community*

- You should have already completed Admin Updates with a prefix of 0 as a part of the pre-work
- **General Field** includes Admin Updates with a prefix of 1
- *Reminder:* the admin updates are not in physical order within the community, but they are linked from the web site

*See our web site for more details*

<https://ldlprogram.web.illinois.edu/dissertation/courses/general-field/>

# Process Reminders

EDS Onboarding Presentation

Navigating the EDS webpages

Work Submission and Review Process

# Reminders from the Exam-Dissertation Sequence Onboarding Session

**Key Resources:** LDL Web site, the LDL Doctoral Dissertation Sequence community on CGScholar, and synchronous sessions

**Key Synchronous Sessions:** Mondays from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m. CT and/or Tuesdays from 9:00 to 10:00 a.m. CT (follow our Happening Now page)

## Keys to Success

- Read all of the resources we provide – and seek out more
- Actively participate in the community – *both asynchronously and synchronously*
- Engage meaningfully in the peer review process – *both as an author and as a reviewer*

General Field  
EPOL 586

Special Field  
EPOL 587

Theory &  
Methodology  
EPOL 588

Preliminary Exam  
EPOL 591

Data Collection,  
Analysis, and  
Draft Dissertation  
EPOL 599

Final Dissertation  
and Defense  
EPOL 599

# General Field Onboarding Sessions

- **General Field Onboarding Video:**
  - Basic Introduction to the general field and exploring your tentative research question and general field
  - Literature Review milestone and General Field Qualifying Exam
- **General Field Live Workshop:** Hands-on exercises and open question and answer period
- **Literature Review Hybrid Workshop:** Introduction to the Literature Review genre, including hands-on exercises

***Complete the Admin Updates in the Community***

<https://ldlprogram.web.illinois.edu/dissertation/courses/general-field/>

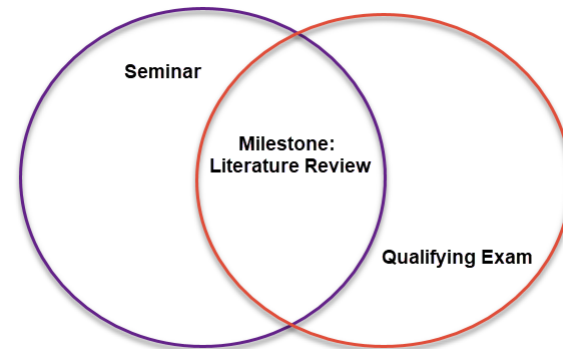
# General Field and Literature Review Purpose



# General Field Purpose

***Demonstrate a broad understanding of your selected general field of interest, as supported by a review of the literature***

- Think of this milestone as seeking out the literature and curating enough material to teach an entry level undergraduate course in your selected field.
- By the end of this milestone you should have the expertise to be able to teach this entry level undergraduate course.
- You will submit your literature review as your qualifying exam



# Getting Started

***Complete the Admin Updates in the Community!***

<https://ldlprogram.web.illinois.edu/dissertation/courses/general-field/>

*Do not jump into writing your literature review too quickly*

- Set Goals – both short and long term
- Review the **1. General Field** webpage
- Complete the admin updates in the community
  - Start reading the existing literature and dissertations in your field
  - Identify a tentative dissertation research question
  - Select your General Field of Interest
  - Submit samples of your work that demonstrate the literature review genre
- Start or continue using a Bibliographical Database
- Maintain an annotated bibliography

# Selecting a General Field

# Tentative Research Question vs. General Field

1. Start with a tentative research question
2. What is the general field that is associated with the tentative research question? **This should be approved by Dr. Kalantzis (see the admin updates for more details)**
3. Once you define the field, set the tentative question aside in your mind, but still include it in your posts and milestones to remind us of it

Your General Field Literature Review should refer to your General Field **NOT** your Dissertation. *The dissertation will come later.*

***Complete the Admin Updates in the Community!***

<https://ldlprogram.web.illinois.edu/dissertation/courses/general-field/>

# Examples: Define your General Field

**Tentative Question:** What are the effects of a music therapy intervention on the self-regulation of students with externalizing behaviors?

**General Field Option**

Music therapy for K-12 students

**Tentative Question:** How does learning design influence career changers in the cybersecurity industry?

**General Field Option**  
Cybersecurity Education

**Tentative Question:** How is Employee onboarding changing to meet the needs of the virtual workforce?

**General Field Option**

Employee Onboarding

# Exercise: Define your General Field

Write down your tentative dissertation research question.

Things to consider when defining your general field:

1. Eliminate too narrow demographics\* (exceptions may exist)
  - Elementary, Secondary, Higher Ed or even Community Colleges may be okay, but “first year students” or a specific race or gender is typically too specific, but every case is different
2. Eliminate conclusions or your assessments; no judgment at this stage
  - Examples to **avoid** as a general field: Changes in X or Popular Y, etc.
3. If you have two potential “general fields”, which one is more dominant?

# Getting your General Field Approved

- Once you select the general field, submit your tentative question and general field to Dr. Kalantzis for approval and copy Dr. Francis (see the admin updates)
- Alternatively, you may present this in a group advising session to engage in a dialogue about your selected field
  - Prepare a single slide that includes your tentative research question, your general field, and any concerns that you want to address (i.e. is this too narrow? Should I limit this to just a specific demographic, etc.)
- Include your tentative question in your general field literature review prior to the introduction to remind Dr. Kalantzis of what led to your general field. But this is not a part of your general field.

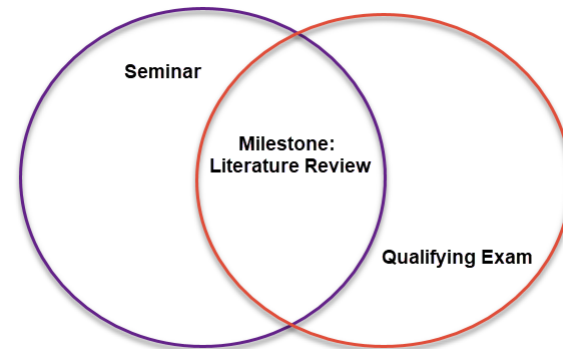
# Literature Review Milestone and General Field Qualifying Exam



# Reminder: General Field Purpose

***Demonstrate a broad understanding of your selected general field of interest, as supported by a review of the literature***

- Think of this milestone as seeking out the literature and curating enough material to teach an entry level undergraduate course in your selected field.
- By the end of this milestone you should have the expertise to be able to teach this entry level undergraduate course.
- You will submit your literature review as your qualifying exam



# Literature Review Purpose

## *The Literature reviewed should reveal:*

- Definitions\*
- Associated Theories
- History and Evolution
- Practices
- Research findings
- Debates

### ***Notes about the Dissertation Chapters:***

*Temporarily Part 1 of your Chapter 2 Literature Review  
for the purpose of the General Field examination*

*This work will eventually be integrated into your  
Dissertation Chapter 2 as a single literature review*

***See our web site for more details***

<https://ldlprogram.web.illinois.edu/dissertation/courses/general-field/>

# Seeking out Literature

# Getting Organized for your Literature Review

- Use a bibliographical database platform (i.e. Mendeley, Zotero)
- Tag your sources as you read them; these will help inform themes, theories, demographics, methodologies, etc.
- Capture both the claim, but also the **evidence** that supports the claim
- Include the context of the study – why, what, who, how?
- Complete your annotated bibliography even though you don't submit it
- Keep the focus on your General Field, but tag things if they apply elsewhere
- Looking ahead at the Structure guidance...
  - The emerged theories, themes, and subthemes will become sections and subsections (*use the Scholar structure tool*)

# Literature Review Samples

- We ask you to submit multiple samples of your writing so that we can provide timely feedback on a small excerpt for your work and also assess your understanding of the literature review genre
- The goal is to help you feel more comfortable with the genre prior to writing your full literature review; this will minimize the revision cycles
- You are expected to self-assess the samples
  - Describe how a particular sentence or group of sentences demonstrate(s) an attribute of the literature review genre. Be specific.
  - In your very first sample that you are using from a previous course, you may find that your work has examples of opportunities for improvement

# Seeking out Literature

- Do not choose your theories or themes in advance
  - The literature will reveal the theories and themes as you seek out literature in order to answer the questions
- Identify questions that you want the literature to answer related to your **General Field**
  - What definitions are associated with my general field?
  - What are the theories associated with my general field?
  - What is the history of my general field? (How) Have things changed over time?
  - What debates are examined in or emerge from the literature?
  - What are the findings associated with my general field?
  - EX: What are the benefits of...?
  - EX: What are the challenges of....?
- Focus on primary sources; avoid secondary sources
- Focus on scholarly, peer-reviewed sources
- Don't stop at 20 sources; if you feel you are not able to find many sources, contact the education librarian (watch her videos (on our website) first!)

# Overall Dissertation Structure

- Note to Reviewers and Dated Change Notes
- Title Page
- Abstract (placeholder)
- Table of Contents
- Chapter 1: Introduction (placeholder)
- **Chapter 2: Literature Review**
  - **Part 1 General Field**
    - Part 2 Special Field
- Chapter 3: Theory and Methodology (placeholder for chapters 3-5)
- Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion
- Chapter 5: Recommendations and Conclusions
- References
- Appendix

*Include a note to reviewers and change notes before your Title page and placeholders for other elements*

*The focus of this work is on the General Field*

# General Field

## Literature Review Structure (Chapter 2 Part 1)

1. Introduction to your **General Field** Literature Review
2. Definitions Associated with XXX, if applicable
  - How does the literature define your topic?
  - It may make more sense to integrate definitions into the body of your work
3. Theories (Theories associated with XXX)
  - This refers to all theories associated with your general field
  - Don't choose a few theories, but instead, what does the literature say are the related theories?
4. Multiple Themed sections
  - The section title should not be called Themes – name them something relevant to your topic, based on the literature
  - This should include subsections to keep your work organized (use the Scholar structure tool)
5. Gaps in the Literature
  - What is lacking in the literature? What additional research needs to be done?
6. Conclusion
  - Summary of the literature review and next steps
7. References
  - Be sure that your references are cited properly

*All should  
be in the  
voice of the  
literature  
except the  
Gaps and  
Conclusion*

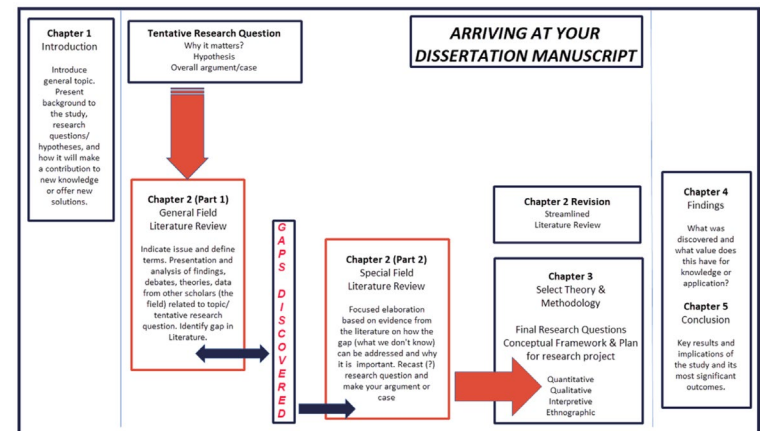


# From the General Field Literature Review to the Dissertation Literature Review

## Progression

1. Chapter 2 Part 1: General Field LR
2. Chapter 2 Part 2: Special Field LR
3. Chapter 2 Literature Review:  
*Streamlined for research proposal*
4. Chapter 2 Literature Review:  
*Updated for final dissertation*

See full image in the  
[EDS Process PDF](#) on  
our web site



# Submission and Review Reminders

Don't forget to review the Work Submission and Review webpage

# Ways to Ensure a Quality Submission: Overall

1. Proofread: Check for overall writing quality, flow, word choices, grammar, etc.
  - Procure a copy editor
2. Check the length and thoroughness of your work
  - The Main body of the work is where the word count matters
3. Follow the Work Submission and Review process
4. Ensure that your literature review refers to the General Field, not “my study” or “my dissertation”. And this is not a “paper”.
5. Do not use First Person
6. Ensure that the purpose of the current work is clear
7. Include objective section and paragraph topical sentences
8. Use the Scholar Structure tool for both headings and subheadings
9. Follow the latest APA style guide
10. Heed advisor and/or peer feedback
  - Wait to submit until after peer feedback has come in.

# Ways to Ensure a Quality Submission: Literature Review Genre

1. Avoid cherry-picking sources to satisfy your agenda or assumptions.
  - Do not pre-select theories and themes; instead allow the literature to reveal what these should be
2. Be thorough enough to represent the field, theory, or methodology.
  - While we provide word count minimums, this does not always mean that your work will be sufficient if you just barely surpass the minimum.
3. Avoid generalized topical sentences
  - But if used, ensure proper evidence or justification
4. Avoid your voice being too prominent in the Literature Review
  - Make sure it is always clear who is speaking - the literature or the student.
  - This is less of an issue with Chapter 3.
5. Elaborate on the context of the studies being cited
6. Diversify your sources and synthesize multiple sources.
  - Avoid paragraphs dedicated to a single source
  - Avoid this feeling like an annotated bibliography

# While you Wait for Feedback; You can Keep Moving

- Review and refine your ideas and purpose
- Complete peer reviews for others
- Review the process documentation on our web site and community
- Review published examples from our alumni
- Format word version of 'works/chapters' to align with the Graduate College dissertation style guide
- Complete the admin updates for the next step
- Gather sources for the next step
- Ensure that your change notes are documented

# Literature Review Guidance

# Literature Review Genre

- The voice of the literature should speak
- Avoid stating your own claims, opinions, knowledge, or assumptions
- Group sources by theme, as revealed by the literature
- When citing what an author said, be sure to elaborate on the evidence of the claim
- Elaborate on the context of the study: Why, what, who, how?
- Avoid a single source per paragraph (this is not an annotated bibliography)
  - avoid overuse of a single source in a single or across multiple paragraphs
- Synthesize multiple sources while still letting the literature speak, but avoid overuse of direct quotes

The LDL web site includes additional [Literature Review guidelines](#)

# Academic Phrases Do and Don't

## Use

- Claims
- Concluded
- Found
- Posits
- Others...

*And then elaborate on what the authors claim, post, found, etc.*

## DO NOT Use

- Highlights
- Mentions
- Noted
- Said, unless a direct quote

Refer to the Academic Phrasebook link on our [Literature Review guidelines](#)



# Literature Review Genre Examples

## *Examples*

- **The voice of the literature should speak;** Start sentences with the author to make it clear that the literature is speaking.
  - Smith (2019) posits that....
- **Synthesize multiple sources while still letting the literature speak**
  - Jones (2020) found such and such, however, Rogers (2021) concluded that.... Similarly, Ebert and Siebert (2018) claim ... .

# Literature Review Genre Examples

## *Examples*

- **Evidence-based**; Elaborate on the claim, in the voice of the literature.
  - Based on a study of five hundred first year college students, Smith (2019) argue .... In this study he found that...

*Refer to the Rubric for more guidance:*

[https://ldlprogram.web.illinois.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/General-and-Special-Field-Rubric\\_2021.pdf](https://ldlprogram.web.illinois.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/General-and-Special-Field-Rubric_2021.pdf)

# Common Literature Review Challenges

## Challenge

## Solution

Choosing your research study before you start



You can have a tentative research question, which will allow you to identify your general field topic, then let the literature guide you to the next step

Starting your Literature Review before completing the Admin Updates



Complete the Admin Updates/ Individual Updates in order

Stating what you already know (not following the literature review genre)



Writing should speak in the voice of the literature

Dedicating a paragraph to a single source, like an annotated bibliography



Synthesize multiple sources