



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.**



# Process Reminders

Refer to the EDS

Onboarding Presentation

and the Navigating the

Exam-Dissertation

Sequence web pages

# 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 8:00 to 9:00 a.m. CT (follow our Happening Now page and our EDS Google calendar)

## 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

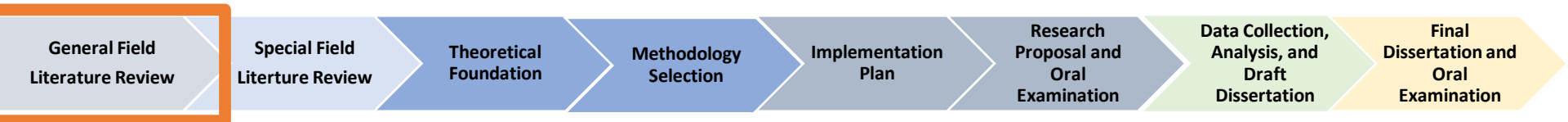
Final Dissertation  
and Defense  
EPOL 599

# Reminder: Seminars, Milestones, & Exams

## Seminars



## Milestones



## Examinations



# 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/>

# General Field Purpose

## *Demonstrate a broad understanding of your selected general field of interest*

### *Notes*

- Definitions
  - Associated Theories
  - Practices
  - Research findings
  - Etc.
- *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/>

# Getting Started





# Scholarly Reading and Writing

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

- Complete the admin updates in the community
- Read the existing literature
- Maintain an annotated bibliography
- Other assignments are required prior to your literature review milestone
- Submit a sample of your work that demonstrates the literature review genre (see admin update for details)
  - This must be approved before your full literature review will be reviewed

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

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



# Tentative Research Question vs. General Field

- Start with a tentative research question
- What is the general field that is associated with the tentative research question?
- Once you define the field, set the tentative question aside
- 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 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 and copy & paste it

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
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
- 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.



# 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
- 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!

# 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, etc.
- Capture both the claim, but also the **evidence** that supports the claim
- 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*)

# 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, 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
  - 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

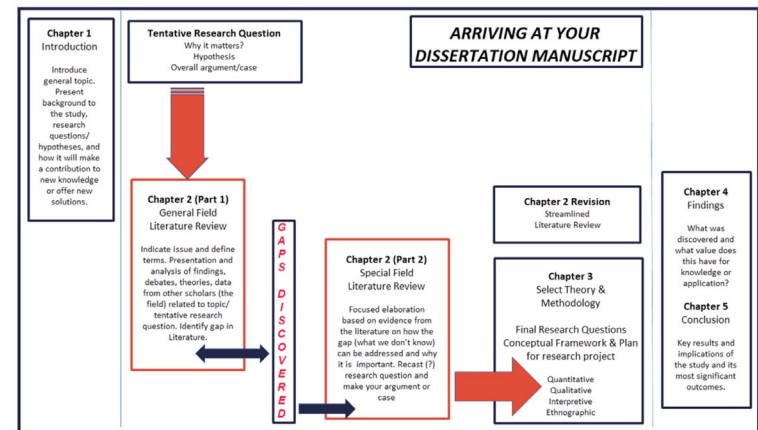
*All should  
be in the  
voice of the  
literature  
except the  
Gaps and  
Conclusion*

# 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



# 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
- 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)



# Top Reasons Works are Sent Back

1. Work refers to “my study” or “my dissertation” when this is a General Field LR.
2. Purpose of the current work is not clear.
3. Structure tool was not used or not used sufficiently.
4. Indicators that sources have been cherry-picked to satisfy the author’s agenda or assumptions. Pre-selecting theories and themes rather than allowing the literature to reveal what these should be
5. Not 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.
6. Not considering peer feedback and/or submitting before feedback has come in.
7. Author’s voice is too prominent in the Literature Review
  - It isn’t always clear who is speaking - the literature or the student.
  - This is less of an issue with Chapter 3.
8. Lack of diversity of sources or limited synthesis of multiple sources.



# Common Literature Review Challenges

## Challenge

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

# Timing

## *Pace yourself, work ahead if you can*

- You can start attending the group advising sessions anytime
- Be sure to complete the Admin Updates with a prefix of 0 before the term starts
- Be prepared for this to take more than 8 weeks
- Be prepared for revisions after you submit for advisor review; this is all meant to be a process and not “one and done”
- Refer to the Suggested Timelines PDF
- You can receive an incomplete if you are unable to complete it in 8 weeks; once you finish the work, we will change your grade

# Questions?