



**2025-26**

**CFT DISSERTATION GUIDELINES**

COUPLE AND FAMILY THERAPY GRADUATE PROGRAMS

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## General Information

The PhD/PsyD represents completion of a course of study that provides integrated training in the skills and techniques of an applied discipline along with academic scholarship and research. The characteristics common to all CFT doctoral dissertations are that they make an original, significant contribution to the fields of psychology and couple and family therapy, reflect the integration of practice and scholarship, are of publishable quality, and demonstrate competence in evaluating the literature and practice in a specialization area. **Topics must be in the field of couple and family therapy. In keeping with program objectives and values, topics addressing multicultural diversity and multinational issues are strongly encouraged.**

Students take four core courses, two statistics courses and two advanced research methods courses that help them get prepared for the dissertation process. Students also must pick a dissertation committee to assist them with the process. The dissertation committee chairperson has the responsibility for guiding and directing the dissertation. The dissertation committee chairperson needs to be picked before the student enrolls in the Dissertation I course. Committee members provide a supportive, less extensive role. See following sections for more detail on the role of committee chairs and members.

Students are sometimes confused about the extent to which this is an independent process and how that relates to the student-committee relationship in determining the scope, content, and quality of the dissertation. Though it is largely an independent process, faculty are responsible for providing support and direction and are responsible for the overall quality of the dissertation. This means that everything from topic selection to design of the project is approved by committee members, particularly the chair. Students can expect to meet frequently with their chairperson in developing the dissertation and to review multiple drafts. Frequency of contacts, whether by person, by e-mail, video, or phone should be negotiated directly with the chairperson. Similarly, both faculty members and students should specify turnaround time for reading drafts. **Two weeks are generally needed for reading drafts of the dissertation;** both parties should specifically note exceptions for either more or less time.

*Dissertation Type(s):* Consistent with program outcomes and curriculum, the CFT Doctoral (PhD/PsyD) Program encourages quantitative, qualitative or mixed methods dissertations. The following list provides examples of some of the research designs to consider. For more information consult research methodology texts.

Examples include:

- Descriptive
- Grounded Theory
- Phenomenology
- Correlational
- Formal Case Studies (Sprenkle)
- Causal-comparative
- Quasi-experimental
- Experimental
- Program evaluation
- Meta-analytic literature reviews
- Structured Observation
- Ethnography

## The Doctoral (PhD/PsyD) CFT Dissertation Committee

The dissertation committee consists of a minimum of three members. Normally all members of the committee will be core CFT faculty members. However, in unusual situations, a third member of the committee may be an adjunct faculty member. See the [Request for Approval of Dissertation Committee Composition Form](#) for obtaining approval of the dissertation committee. To have a non-core (adjunct) faculty as a third member of the committee, the student must demonstrate that there is not a core faculty member systemwide available with similar expertise. The chair and at least one member must always be a part of the core CFT Faculty. *When adjunct faculty are appointed as committee member, contracts need to be initiated for the term/semester that the student is sitting for proposal or final defense.*

*Under certain circumstances, in addition to the chair and two dissertation committee members/readers, students may request an **additional** 'outside' reader to provide feedback on the student's work. Any 'outside' committee member (not an Alliant employee) will not receive a faculty appointment and will not be required to complete the HR contracting process. As the 'outside' reader will be serving at the request of the student, there will be no compensation for the reader's contributions from the University. A student would need to complete the Request for Outside Reader form for any additional readers they chose, and the reader would need to complete the Outside Reader Acknowledgement form. As the individuals would not be employees.*

*Procedures for approval of non-core Faculty Committee Members.* Non-Core Faculty Committee. To have a non-core (adjunct) faculty as a third member of the committee, the student must demonstrate that there is not an available core faculty member systemwide with similar expertise. Members must a) hold an earned doctorate in MFT, psychology or a field pertinent to the dissertation topic, and b) have demonstrated competence in research and the topic area. Application for non-core Faculty Committee members must be approved by the committee chair and the home Branch Director. Application is made by filing the appropriate form ([Request for Approval of Dissertation Committee Composition Form](#)), a statement of rationale for membership, and a vita of the proposed member. determined

*Non-Eligibility.* The following examples involve relationships which would make an individual ineligible for Committee membership because of possible conflict of interest: a) personal therapist of Candidate b) business associates, employees, employers of Candidate, c) co-psychological assistants of the Candidate reporting to the same employer, d) relatives/friends of the Candidate, and/or e) graduates of CSPP/Alliant- within the past three years.

Students must decide on their chair the semester before they start taking their dissertation sequence which is typically the Spring of their first year of doctoral program. Students need to have the [Request for Approval of Dissertation Committee Composition Form](#) signed by the Chair during the Spring semester and enroll under their Chair's name for the dissertation sequence starting Fall semester of their second year in the doctoral program. The signature of the Chair is required prior to registration for Dissertation I. Committee membership needs to be determined by the semester you start your dissertation sequence, which is typically the Fall of the second year of your doctoral program. Committee members need to sign the Request for Approval of Dissertation Committee Composition Form by the end of the Fall semester. By the end of the same Fall semester (Fall of the second year of the doctoral program), the [Request for Approval of Proposal Topic](#) form also needs to be completed and signatures from the Chair and the committee members need to be obtained.

*Changes in Committee membership:* On rare occasions a chair or member may be changed. To provide continuity of guidance, such changes should be made only when unavoidable. [Request for Approval of Dissertation Committee Composition Form](#) which is completed and submitted to the Branch Director or Systemwide Program Director for approval and guidance.

*Role of the Dissertation Committee Chairperson.* The chair is responsible for supervising the scope and design of the research, the development of the written proposal, the conduct of the research, and the preparation of the final document. In doing so, the chair asserts that the dissertation is academically sound, is clearly and correctly written, and provides an original contribution to the field.

The chair is also responsible for ensuring that the student follows both professional and University guidelines for the protection of human subjects and that he or she obtains necessary permission to conduct the research before initiating subject/participant recruitment and data collection. Candidate cannot initiate participant recruitment or data collection prior to the proposal meeting and prior to receiving IRB approval.

The chair must approve the proposal and final document before the student distributes copies to the committee and before the committee can meet formally. The chair must attest that the dissertation is ready for defense before a date for the defense can be set.

The chair is not an editor. The student has the responsibility of editing the document so that it complies with the appropriate format and is written in Standard American English. A professional editor may be necessary. If needed the editor should be involved early in the proposal phase of writing the dissertation. *The chair is responsible for assuring that the document meets these requirements before it is approved for submission and may recommend or require that the student use an editor.*

*Role of Dissertation Committee Members:* Committee members are responsible for meeting with the student individually and as a group. Individual meetings generally discuss selected aspects of the work. Committee members are committed to attend two in-person (or videoconference) committee meetings: the proposal meeting and final oral defense. Although members may consult on various portions of the dissertation, their role is considerably less extensive than that of the chair. They are responsible, however, for reading and critiquing preliminary versions of the proposal and dissertation and voting to pass or fail the proposal and defense of the dissertation.

*Dissertation Topic:* Students to submit the [Request for Approval of Proposal Topic.](#)

## **The Doctoral (PhD/PsyD) CFT Dissertation Proposal and Meeting**

Proposal Should Include:

- A clear, explicit and detailed description of the issues, question, or problem to be addressed – the research topic should be systemic and relevant for the field of Marriage/Couple and Family Therapy.
- A focused, scholarly synthesis of the relevant literature that provides a rationale for the significance of the issues, question, or problem addressed
- A discussion of the methodology (e.g., participants, procedures, data analysis, etc.)

For most types of dissertations, the above information constitutes the first three chapters of the dissertation, which is essentially all the material up to the actual collection of data and analysis. See following section on manuscript format.

Students must not collect data prior to satisfactory completion of the proposal meeting and approval of the proposal, as well as approval by the [Institutional Review Board](#) (IRB). If a pilot study is to collect data for some aspect of the study, approval by the committee and IRB must be obtained.

Purpose of the Proposal Meeting include:

- Ascertain the feasibility of the proposed study/project
- Answer any questions that are unclear from the written proposal
- Raise potential difficulties that might not have occurred to the student regarding the conduct of the proposed research and suggest alternatives where possible
- Clarify any issues regarding procedural details, rationales for selection of methodology, instrumentation, subject/participant pool and so forth that would need to be corrected in order to facilitate the completion of the proposed study

The proposal meeting typically includes a brief 15-20 minute PowerPoint presentation that outlines the statement of the problem, the relevance of the study specifically for the field of M/CFT, and the data collection and analysis procedures. The student is expected to be able to answer questions about all aspects of the proposal and must *demonstrate understanding of the literature, methodology, and any statistical procedures or analyses that might be involved in the study. The proposal document is a 'finished' document appropriately formatted and edited.* The proposal meeting should not serve primarily as a working committee meeting. Typically, however, there will be alterations or changes made at the meeting.

### Definition of Proposal Meeting Outcomes

Pass – the document is satisfactory and there are no required revisions. Student is approved by the committee to submit IRB application. The Committee must sign the [Preliminary/Proposal Oral Defense: Scheduling and Results Form](#).

Pass/Chair to Supervise Revisions – the document is satisfactory and requires no substantive modifications and/or additions, however, there are minor revisions that can be supervised and signed off on by the Chair. Once methodological revisions have been approved by the Chair, the student is approved by the Committee to submit IRB application. Once the Chair approves all edits, the Committee must sign the [Preliminary/Proposal Oral Defense: Scheduling and Results Form](#). All recommended revisions will be addressed in a cover-letter (see [APA style blog](#) for example) and submitted to the Committee at the time of defense along with the final dissertation defense manuscript.

Pass/Committee to Review Revisions – the document is satisfactory, but there are some substantive modifications and/or additions that the Committee needs to review before the student is approved to submit IRB application. The Chair and the Committee will decide if revisions can be reviewed via email submission of the manuscript, or if another meeting needs to be scheduled in addition to

manuscript resubmission. Once the Chair approves all edits, the Committee must sign the [Preliminary/Proposal Oral Defense: Scheduling and Results Form](#). All recommended revisions will be addressed in an [APA style](#) cover-letter that will be submitted along with the revised manuscript to the Committee and signed off on by the Committee prior to the IRB application submission.

*Fail* – significant and essentially non-remediable deficiency in the manuscript. Committee should document all problem areas and remediation and/or new requirements. In all failures, a second proposal meeting must be held. If the committee approves the revised proposal at the second proposal meeting, they pass the student and sign [Preliminary/Proposal Oral Defense: Scheduling and Results Form](#).

Approval of the dissertation proposal constitutes an agreement between the student and dissertation committee. In effect, the committee agrees that conducting and analyzing the research *as proposed and approved* will yield a database suitable for dissertation level research. Acceptance of the proposal, however, does not guarantee the acceptability of the finished dissertation.

Minor changes in procedure, design, or analysis may sometimes be necessary after the actual study has begun. If these changes are minimal (for example, a slight change in instructions), then the chair alone can approve them. If major changes are necessary (reduction in sample size, change in design, etc.), then the student should first secure the chair's approval and then discuss the changes with the committee. It is important to secure the full committee's endorsement of major changes in writing, either with or without a committee meeting. **Any changes that are made to the procedure, design, or analysis must be outlined in the cover letter that will be submitted to the Committee along with the final defense manuscript.**

## Final Manuscript

### Style and Format

See *"Formatting Manual & Forms"* tab on the link below.

[Dissertation & Doctoral Project Formatting & Clearance: Formatting Manual & Forms](#)

The APA Publication Manual is primarily for submitting papers for journal publication, so it lacks guidelines specific to dissertations and doctoral projects. To fill this gap, Alliant has created systemwide guidelines for you to follow. This document provides details on those guidelines.

### Chapter Organization

The following is a recommended format for the dissertation document, including guides as to number of pages for each chapter. However, chapter organization and length may be modified with the approval of the committee to maximize the coherence, logic, and readability of the document. **The dissertation proposal should typically include full dissertation-length Chapter I/Introduction, Chapter II/Literature Review, and Chapter III/Methodology.** The dissertation defense could be a full five-chapter or article length dissertation. See page 9 on recommended format for the publication length dissertation for the dissertation defense.

### Chapter 1 – Introduction and Statement of the Problem\*

Chapter 1 is an Introduction and Statement of the Problem (approximately 5 to 10 pages). Introduction

and statement of the problem starts with a broad general area of interest and then focuses to a highly specific topic. It identifies the need for the study from an applied perspective and its significance, along with a brief description of the chosen methodology. **The problem identified should be systemic in nature and specifically discuss the relevance of the topic within the field of Marriage/Couple and Family Therapy.** This section also typically includes the theoretical framework and definition of terms.

### **Chapter 2 – Literature Review**

This involves a conceptualization of the research question in the context of current theory, research, and practice. This is a focused, scholarly synthesis of the relevant literature specifying and justifying the problem or controversy addressed in the dissertation. Major terms, concepts, and assumptions are often explained here. When the methodology calls for specific hypothesis, they are typically included at the end of this chapter. Quotes should be minimal, if used at all. Typically, this review is completed between 30 and a maximum of 70 pages.

### **Chapter 3 – Method**

Description of methods used to collect and organize data. The research design and justification should go at the beginning of this chapter. This discussion typically involves between 10 and 20 pages.

The order of this chapter should be as follows:

- Research design/type of study
- Participants, sampling, recruitment, including protection of human participants
- Measures and/or instrumentation (e.g., interviews, semi-structured interviews).

Instruments must include data on reliability and validity or include methods of validation (credibility and trustworthiness) in case of a qualitative design.

- Data collection procedures
- Data analysis/presentation of data
- Limitations.

\*If a student chooses to do a qualitative design like Narrative Inquiry or auto ethnography, the number of chapters and the layout may differ based on the qualitative approach used.

\*\*For the dissertation proposal, the Appendices should also be submitted for Committee review prior to the IRB submission process. Appendices typically include Informed Consent, Demographic Questionnaire, Instruments/Measures of Analysis, Recruitment Flyer/Email, Resources/Referrals for Participants, etc. These appendices will also be included in the final dissertation defense manuscript.

### **Chapter 4 – Results**

Presentation and analysis of data. The chief goal of this chapter is to provide information relevant to the issues identified in the purpose and hypothesis. Typically, this chapter begins with a presentation of the demographics of the participants. The page length varies depending upon methodology.

### **Chapter 5 – Discussion**

Observations and discussion of the implications of the data for the field of Marriage/Couple and Family Therapy and beyond, relationship with reviewed literature, limitations of the research (methodology, design) implications/recommendations to future research and clinical implications.

**References** – follows the concluding chapter, includes all references cited in the dissertation

## Appendices

### Publication- Length Dissertation

Students may elect to submit the **final version of the dissertation** in publication length (approximately 30 pages for the Manuscript chapter). **Students who choose this option are expected to complete a full-length proposal and include the approved proposal along with any revisions, in an appendix.**

In the final write up, Students should include other important elements (e.g., informed consent, interview protocols, interview schedules, measure items, result tables) as appendices (these elements may be submitted as potential supplementary online material when the manuscript is submitted for publication review). Below is the suggested format for the publication-length dissertation. Students may have one (typical format) or more manuscripts depending on the scope of their study.

- Chapter 1: Manuscript 1 (30 page maximum including references). The manuscript will follow the standard format:
  - Title Page
  - Abstract
  - Introduction
  - Literature Review
  - Methods
  - Results
  - Discussion
  - References (for the manuscript)
  
- Chapter 2: Manuscript 2 (if applicable). This manuscript must also be 30 page maximum including reference. The manuscript will follow the standard format:
  - Title Page
  - Abstract
  - Introduction
  - Literature Review
  - Methods
  - Results
  - Discussion
  - References (for the manuscript)
  
- **Appendices will include the approved full proposal including all revisions required at the proposal meeting, all recruitment materials, data collection materials, and all references from the proposal.**

### Definition of Defense Meeting Outcomes

Pass – the document is satisfactory and there are no required revisions. Student is approved by the Committee to proceed with the Library submission. The student should complete the [Dissertation Final Defense: Scheduling and Results Form](#) and the [Library Dissertation Clearance form](#).

Pass/Chair to Supervise Revisions – the document is satisfactory and requires no substantive modifications and/or additions, however, there are minor revisions that can be supervised and

signed off on by the Chair. Once all revisions have been approved by the Chair, the student is approved by the Committee to submit to the Library. Once the Chair approves all edits, the student should complete the [Dissertation Final Defense: Scheduling and Results Form](#) and the [Library Dissertation Clearance form](#).

*Pass/Committee to Review Revisions* – the document is satisfactory, but there are some substantive modifications and/or additions that the Committee needs to review before the student is approved to submit to the Library. The Chair and the Committee will decide if revisions can be reviewed via email submission of the manuscript, or if another meeting needs to be scheduled in addition to manuscript resubmission. All recommended revisions will be addressed in an [APA style](#) cover-letter that will be submitted via email along with the revised manuscript to the Committee and signed off on by the Committee prior to the Library submission. Once the Chair has signed off on all final revisions, the student should complete the [Dissertation Final Defense: Scheduling and Results Form](#) and the [Library Dissertation Clearance form](#).

*Fail* – significant and essentially non-remediable deficiency in the manuscript. Committee should document all problem areas and remediation and/or new requirements. In all failures, a second defense meeting must be held. If the committee approves the revised defense at the second defense meeting, they pass the student and the student should complete the [Dissertation Final Defense: Scheduling and Results Form](#) and the [Library Dissertation Clearance form](#). Students that fail their dissertation defense a second time will be referred to SERC for remediation.

## Recommended Dissertation Timeline

### Dissertation I (Fall G2)

Students should identify their problem statement/select a research topic, identify research question(s), and select methodology. Students should identify a theoretical framework for their study and begin the literature review to identify gaps in the literature and significance of the study. Students should work with the Chair to select the other two members of the Dissertation Committee. See Dissertation Step 1 for more information.

### Dissertation II (Spring G2)

Students should complete their literature review and finalize Chapters 1-3 of the dissertation proposal. Students should obtain Chair approval to schedule the Dissertation Proposal meeting. See Dissertation Step 2 for more information.

### Dissertation III (Fall G3)

**Students should schedule and complete their Doctoral Examination before the end of the Dissertation III semester.** Once the Dissertation Proposal has been completed and approved by the Dissertation Committee, students should submit their IRB application. Upon approval from the IRB, students should begin participant recruitment and data collection. See Dissertation Steps 3 and 4 for more information.

### Dissertation IV (Spring G3)

Students should complete their data analysis. Upon approval from the Dissertation Chair, students should schedule and complete the Dissertation Defense. Once the Dissertation has been successfully defended, and all required edits have been approved by the Chair and Committee, the student should complete the Library Submission process. See Dissertation Steps 5, 6, and 7 for more information.

\*Students will receive a letter grade for each dissertation course. If students do not meet the expectations of each sequence of Dissertation, they may receive a lower grade, fail the course, and/or be referred to SERC. Students who receive a B- or lower in a dissertation course may be required to retake the course. Students who receive a C or lower in a dissertation course will be required to retake the course and will be referred to SERC.

### Dissertation Extension

If students do not complete their dissertation after the planned four semesters of dissertation, they have to sign up for **dissertation extension**.

All students who are enrolled in their first dissertation extension course will be referred to SERC. At minimum, a timeline with specific work activities needed for dissertation completion, including library clearance, within one year needs to be developed and agreed upon by the student and Chair and submitted to Branch director(s).

The student will be monitored closely in each semester of dissertation extension and may be referred to SERC each semester that they do not make progress toward defense. Students must be referred to SERC upon enrollment in a third semester of dissertation extension. The purpose of the SERC process is to address any barriers or obstacles the student is experiencing in making progress on the dissertation, and to provide support and resources to the student. Student may be placed on academic warning, as determined by the SERC.

Students will have to update their timeline (with exact target dates for each task including defense and library clearance), with Chair approval each extension semester. IF the student has not defended by the 5th semester of dissertation extension, they will have to submit a written explanation of the delay to the SERC. ***Student may be dismissed from the program if progress has not been made toward written plan of completion.***

After the second semester of dissertation extension, there is an additional fee of \$1000 to enroll in dissertation extension ([see catalog for list of fees](#)). Students should consult the financial aid department for information about their eligibility for aid and accrual of additional fees associated with dissertation extension.

## Dissertation Steps

### STEP 1 – Forming the Dissertation Committee and Procedures

Successful completion of the MFT Doctoral Exam is **not** required prior to enrolling in PSY99100 MFT Dissertation I.

- Pre or Co-requisite doctoral level research courses (PSY60210 Advanced Statistics I, PSY93240 Advanced MFT Quantitative, PSY93250 Advanced MFT Qualitative)
- Broad area of interest identified (not required, recommended)

Refer to Section III of this handbook for policies concerning dissertation committee membership eligibility. Note that if a non-core faculty member is desired for committee membership, his/her vita must be attached to [Request for Approval of Dissertation Committee Composition Form](#) for approval by the Branch Director. The outside committee member must read and sign the [Outside Reader Acknowledgment](#).

Forms used in forming the dissertation committee are submitted to the Branch Director. Forms are found on the [CFT Student Hub](#) > Dissertation Forms & Information > [Request for Approval of Dissertation Committee Composition Form](#). The signature of the chairperson is needed on this form before you can sign up for dissertation credits.

1. [Request for Approval of Dissertation Committee Composition Form](#)
2. [Request for Approval of Proposal Topic](#)
3. [Outside Committee Member Acknowledgment](#) (if applicable)

### STEP 2 – Proposal and Proposal Meeting

Refer to previous sections describing the proposal including the content. For most dissertations this involves writing the introduction, literature review and methodology sections. The committee chair supervises this process, reviews drafts and approves the proposal for the proposal meeting. The proposal defense is scheduled so that committee members have two full weeks to read/evaluate the final document. The document should be formatted per instructions and be free of typos and grammatical errors.

**The Oral Defense** may be scheduled once the manuscript is in final form and approved by the chair of the dissertation committee. The Chair approves the final document and scheduling of the oral defense. Typically the Chair provides the student with their availability for the desired proposal date range and the student emails the Committee to coordinate a date/time for the proposal meeting.

- Proposal final draft submitted to committee two weeks before meeting.
- After proposal meeting, if it is a pass, the committee members and Branch Director sign the [Preliminary/Proposal Oral Defense: Scheduling and Results Form](#).
- If it is an Edit, the chairperson and the committee members will sign the [Preliminary/Proposal Oral Defense: Scheduling and Results Form](#) and check the appropriate box. Chair must provide a written feedback listing the changes and revisions required in order for the doctoral Proposal to be fully approved.
- If the outcome is Fail, the committee members, the chairperson and the Branch Director will sign [Preliminary/Proposal Oral Defense: Scheduling and Results Form](#) and check 'Fail.' The form needs to be turned into the Program Coordinator on the student's campus. In the event of a Fail, a second proposal meeting must be held and new forms have to be signed

*See page 6-7 for the definition of outcomes for the proposal meeting.*

### STEP 3 – IRB Procedures

Below is the contact information for Alliant's IRB:

- IRB information: <https://alliantintluni.sharepoint.com/sites/IRBStudent>
- Correspondences to: [alliant-irb@alliant.edu](mailto:alliant-irb@alliant.edu)
- Contact: Hiroko Ida, Institutional Review Board Manager

### STEP 4 – Data Collection, Analysis & Report

Once you have IRB approval with stamped consent forms and you have received your participants signed consent, you may proceed with data collection, analysis, and report writing. See information above for description of what is included in Chapters 3, 4, and 5 of the report writing.

### STEP 5 – Obtain Approval for Scheduling the Dissertation Defense

Prior to scheduling the final oral defense, students **must** have successfully passed both portions of the Doctoral Examination (**no later than the end of the third semester of dissertation, or Dissertation III**). Students must have also completed or have a clear plan to complete all other program requirements. Students must also submit the [Final Dissertation Defense Scheduling Checklist](#), with the campus Student Advisor, the Dissertation Chair, and Branch Director approval (signatures required).

### STEP 6 – Final Dissertation Oral Defense

The final oral defense meeting occurs following approval of the final document by the chair of the dissertation committee. The defense is scheduled so that committee members have two full weeks to read/evaluate the final document. The final document should be formatted per instructions and be free of typos and grammatical errors.

The following guidelines apply for the oral defense:

1. Because the oral defense is a solemn occasion and the culmination of an individual's formal academic training, professional decorum should be maintained.
2. The meeting is open to the **University** community (faculty and other students). Family and friends are permitted to attend with Chair approval. If family, friends, and other students/faculty are invited to the defense, they are invited to remain present during the students presentation of their results. They will be dismissed to the waiting room (either virtual waiting room or designated waiting area on campus) while the Committee engages in dialogue with the student about the results of their research. They will be invited to return for the portion of the meeting where the student receives the results of their defense, after the committee has deliberated.
3. All committee members must be present for the oral defense. Video-conferencing by some committee members is acceptable.

The process generally involves:

- Student is responsible to coordinate date, time, and room location (virtual and/or physical) of defense with Committee members directly.
- The chair will preside over the defense proceedings. During the defense, the student will make a 20-30-minute presentation, typically involving a PowerPoint presentation and will describe the dissertation in detail. A majority of this time should be spent detailing the material from the results and discussion portions of the dissertation. After the oral presentation, the student should be prepared to answer any relevant questions. The defense must provide an opportunity for the Committee to ask questions and to offer constructive feedback. This process typically takes about 2 hours. At this point, family and friends will be excused.
- After the presentation and question sections, the student will exit the room/teleconference. The committee will discuss and determine the outcome of the dissertation defense. The student and their family/friends will be invited back into the meeting for the final results of the defense, after the Committee has deliberated. See below regarding a definition of the outcomes.
- If the outcome of the defense is a Pass, then following the oral presentation and committee deliberation, the student should complete the [Dissertation Final Defense: Scheduling and Results Form](#) and the [Library Dissertation Clearance form](#).

- If the student receives a Fail, the dissertation document has to be revised and another oral defense scheduled. The [Dissertation Final Defense: Scheduling and Results Form](#) needs to be completed and a new form has to be used for future oral exams.

If student receives an Edit, the chairperson and the committee members will sign the [Dissertation Final Defense: Scheduling and Results Form](#) and check appropriate box. Chair must provide a written feedback listing the changes and revisions required in order for the doctoral dissertation to be fully approved. Once the chairperson reviews and accepts the revised proposal, the student needs to have a new [Dissertation Final Defense: Scheduling and Results Form](#) signed by the Chair and Committee Members. The Library Clearance Form has to also be signed by the Chair and Committee Members after the student has passed the final defense.

*See page 10 for definition of defense outcomes. If the student fails the Final Dissertation Oral Defense the second time, the student will be referred to the SERC (Student Evaluation and Review Committee) and may be recommended for dismissal from the program.*

### STEP 7 – Online Library Submission and Graduation Package

**Students should complete the revision process after the oral defense as quickly as possible as they will continue to pay tuition until their dissertation is submitted to the library. Students *must* be registered in a dissertation course at the time of the library clearance.** After completion of the revisions and getting appropriate signatures on the [Dissertation Final Defense: Scheduling and Results Form](#), the student has to follow the University's policy on dissertation clearance. Students should contact their campus librarian for instructions regarding online submission of their completed, approved dissertations. See [Dissertation & Doctoral Project Formatting & Clearance: Submitting to the Library](#) for additional information and forms. Following the successful submission of the dissertation to the library, please request from the Program Coordinator on your campus a graduation checklist to complete the process.

1. **FORMAT:** your final draft: follow both APA and Alliant's style guidelines. See "Formatting – 7<sup>th</sup> Ed. APA Guidelines" and "Formatting Manual & Forms" tabs.  
[Dissertation & Doctoral Project Formatting & Clearance: Formatting Manual & Forms](#)
2. **LIBRARY DISSERTATION CLEARANCE FORM:** obtain branch director, chair, and committee member approval of the revised document in writing on the "Library Dissertation/Doctoral Project Clearance Form." See "Formatting Manual & Forms" tab.  
[Dissertation & Doctoral Project Formatting & Clearance: Formatting Manual & Forms](#)

\*Note that Sections 1 of the Library Dissertation/Doctoral Project Clearance Form must be signed by the dissertation/doctoral project committee and the Branch Director after all final edits have been made and approved. Committee signatures on the form indicate that the student has successfully defended the dissertation and that the final written dissertation/doctoral project as submitted to the library is acceptable in content and format. The Branch Director signature indicates that the student has successfully completed all program requirements related to the dissertation (e.g., submitted departmental forms or any supplemental documentation the program requires for the dissertation/doctoral project).

3. **SUBMIT:** You will upload an electronic (pdf) copy of the manuscript to ProQuest. See *“Submitting to ProQuest ETD” tab*.  
[Dissertation & Doctoral Project Formatting & Clearance: Submitting to ProQuest ETD](#)
  - a. As soon as you upload, library staff is notified that your dissertation is ready for review. This review does *not* include proofreading.
  - b. Within three business days of your submission, you will receive e-mail notification of revisions you need to make, if necessary. Make the changes and re-upload. Repeat until all necessary revisions have been made and the library approves the format.
  - c. If this three-day period must be extended due to unusual circumstance, the DCR will notify the student about when he or she can expect feedback.
  - d. The student repeats this process until the document is acceptable. Allow three business days for review of any revised, re-uploaded version of the manuscript. The time frame for completing the entire clearance process will vary depending on the time of year (e.g., allow more time as graduation or other due dates approach), the extensiveness of problems, responsiveness of the student to initial feedback, etc.
4. **ACCEPTANCE!** Once the manuscript has been accepted, the DCR officially verifies that the electronic version has been uploaded to ProQuest and Cleared. Library DCR complete “Section 3” of the Library Dissertation/Doctoral Clearance Form and sends the form to the Registrar, retains a copy, and e-mails a copy to the student, the dissertation chair, the Academic Affairs Staff member associated with the Program, and the student’s Program Director.
5. **PUBLICATION:** The Library DCR approves and delivers the electronic copy of manuscripts to UMI/ProQuest.



### Signature Page & Manual Quiz

I \_\_\_\_\_ have read and understand the **CFT Dissertation Manual 2025-26**, and I agree to follow the procedures and policies contained in this manual. I also understand that I am responsible for obtaining and reading any and all dissertation guidelines that I need to abide by. I verify that I have read the manual by answering the following manual quiz questions:

1. According to the manual, what is the first step in beginning the dissertation process?
  - a. Data Collection and Analysis
  - b. Proposal and Proposal Meeting
  - c. Forming the Dissertation Committee
  - d. Final Dissertation Oral and Defense
2. What does Chapter 2 entail?
  - a. Methodology
  - b. Literature Review
  - c. Introduction
  - d. Discussions
3. When does the IRB process happen?
  - a. Prior to passing proposal
  - b. After passing proposal
  - c. After data collection
  - d. After the dissertation defense
4. The dissertation sequence has how many dissertation classes totaling to 6 units?
  - a. One
  - b. Two
  - c. Three
  - d. Four
5. In order to get credit for attendance in your dissertation courses, you need to:
  - a. Attend weekly synchronous classes with your chair
  - b. Fill out weekly 'Engagement attestation' on Canvas
  - c. Complete required assignments weekly
  - d. Successfully pass your proposal by the end of the semester
6. To successfully progress through dissertation, students are expected to:
  - a. Propose their dissertation at the end of Dissertation I and defend final dissertation at the end of Dissertation IV
  - b. Propose their dissertation at the end of Dissertation II and defend final dissertation at the end of Dissertation IV
  - c. Propose their dissertation at the end of Dissertation III and defend final dissertation at the end of Dissertation IV
  - d. Propose and defend final dissertation by the end of Dissertation IV, timing does not matter.

7. Which of the following statements is NOT TRUE:
  - a. All core courses are pre-requisites or co-requisites for taking the dissertation sequence.
  - b. If you are doing a quantitative dissertation, you are not required to take the Advanced Qualitative Research course.
  - c. You have to take and pass both the written and oral part of the doctoral exam before you can schedule the final dissertation defense.
  - d. You may have to repeat a dissertation sequence course if you received a B- or below.
8. If students do not complete their dissertation after four semesters of dissertation units, they are allowed to:
  - a. Take any number of dissertation extension courses that will be covered by financial aid until they reach their limit of 8 years in the doctoral program
  - b. Take up to two dissertation extension courses after which they have to pay out of pocket with an additional extension fee and will be referred to SERC for support and remediation.
  - c. Take up to three dissertation extension courses that they have to pay out of pocket with an additional extension fee.
  - d. Take any number of dissertation extension courses that they have to pay out of pocket until they reach their limit of 8 years in the doctoral program.
9. Which of the following is NOT TRUE about the composition of your dissertation committee:
  - a. Chairperson must be a core CFT faculty member from one of the campuses.
  - b. Normally all committee members are also core CFT faculty members.
  - c. The third member can be an adjunct faculty if there isn't an available core faculty member if they have an earned doctorate and has expertise in the area of study.
  - d. The third committee member can be an outside non-Alliant employee if they have an earned doctorate and has expertise in the area of study.
10. Which of the following statements are TRUE regarding Dissertation forms needed for the dissertation process such as, 'Request for Dissertation Committee Approval Form' 'Preliminary Defense Form' and 'Dissertation Final Defense Form':
  - a. The forms have to be obtained from the office of the Academic advisor, filled out manually by the student and sent to the chair and the committee members through email.
  - b. The academic advisor fills out the forms manually for the student and sends it to the chair and the committee members over the email.
  - c. The forms will be accessed by the student electronically through CFT Student Hub and sent to the chair and committee members electronically through Adobe.
  - d. The forms will be accessed by the Academic Advisor electronically through CFT Student Hub and sent to the chair and committee members electronically through Adobe.
11. When do you need to pick your dissertation committee chair and have them fill out the Dissertation Committee Approval Form?
  - a. The semester before you start your dissertation sequence, which is typically the Spring semester of your first year in the doctoral program.
  - b. The semester you start your dissertation sequence, which is typically the Fall of the second year of your doctoral program.
  - c. The semester you defend your dissertation proposal.
  - d. The semester that you defend your final dissertation.

12. When is the LATEST you need to pick your dissertation committee members and have them sign the Dissertation Committee Approval Form?
  - a. The semester before you start your dissertation sequence, which is typically the Spring semester of your first year in the doctoral program.
  - b. The semester you start your dissertation sequence, which is typically the Fall of the second year of your doctoral program.
  - c. The semester you defend your dissertation proposal.
  - d. The semester that you defend your final dissertation.
13. Which of the following is NOT a dissertation format acceptable at Alliant:
  - a. Traditional 5 Chapter original research (Introduction, Literature Review, Methodology, Results & Discussion)
  - b. Traditional 5 Chapter Metaanalysis research (Introduction, Literature Review, Methodology, Results & Discussion)
  - c. Publication Length Dissertation or original research (30-page manuscript(s), Appendices including the approved full proposal with revisions)
  - d. Single Chapter Theoretical dissertations
14. What are the common outcomes of a proposal defense or final dissertation defense:
  - a. Pass, No Pass
  - b. Pass, Fail, Edits to be supervised by chair or full committee
  - c. Pass with Major Revisions, Pass with Minor Revisions, No Pass
  - d. Pass with No Revisions, Pass with Major revisions, Pass with minor Revisions and No Pass
15. The Library Clearance form needs to be signed by
  - a. The chair, committee members and the Branch Director
  - b. The chair, committee members and the systemwide Program Director
  - c. The Chair, Committee members and the Dean
  - d. The Chair, the Branch Director, and the Systemwide Program Director

Student Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*Note: Submit signature page to the Program Coordinator.*

## **Appendix A: Doctoral (PhD/PsyD) Proposal and Dissertation Forms**

### **Step 1: Forming Dissertation Committee Forms**

- a. Select Dissertation Committee:  
[Request for Approval of Dissertation Committee Composition Form](#)
- b. Submit Dissertation Topic:  
[Request for Approval of Proposal Topic](#)

### **STEP 2: Proposal and Proposal Meeting Form**

- c. Schedule Preliminary Defense:  
[Preliminary/Proposal Oral Defense: Scheduling and Results Form](#)

### **Step 3: Oral Defense**

- d. Schedule Final Defense:  
[Dissertation Checklist](#)  
[Dissertation Final Defense: Scheduling and Results Form](#)

## Appendix B: Dissertation Committee - Outside Member

1. **Outside Reader Acknowledgement Form** is on the [CFT Student Hub](#).