University of South Alabama, School of Computing

Three Article Dissertation Model

1. The use of the 3-article dissertation model must be approved by the Dissertation Chair. This model may not be appropriate for all areas of research.

2. The 3-article dissertation should be comprised of a minimum of three publishable articles in A- or B-ranked conferences or journals, or equivalent as determined by the Dissertation Committee, in the respective dissertation-related fields. The articles should form a cohesive body of work that supports a theme or themes that are investigated in the dissertation. The student must be the first author on at least three of the articles.

3. The dissertation will include an abstract that identifies the specified scientific/research question(s) that the dissertation investigates, synthesizes how the articles addressed the question(s), and outlines new scientific questions raised in the course of the dissertation.

4. The introduction often functions to weave the various manuscripts together and describes, for the reader, their 'collective meaning' and 'combined contribution' to the field. It may include:

   a. A definition or statement of the problem
   b. The importance of the problem, i.e., why it is worth researching, why it matters to the field.
   c. The theoretical foundation (s) supporting the problem/issue.
   d. An overview of the relevant literature, if deemed necessary by the committee, as each article will have its own literature review.
   e. The research questions.
   f. The methodology to be used to answer those questions.

5. The conclusion can serve to briefly summarize the dissertation's major findings, limitations, discussion, and recommendations. The student may present and discuss linkages (i.e., similarities and differences) between the separate manuscripts that are included in the dissertation, in an effort to present the document as representative of a coherent body of work. The conclusion chapter normally serves to 'tie' everything together and helps the reader see how the various manuscripts, taken together, contribute to the knowledge base regarding the problem. The conclusion chapter may present/discuss research imperatives, or knowledge gaps, not visible when each manuscript is considered individually and can articulate an agenda for future research on the issues addressed in the dissertation.

6. It is expected that the three articles submitted for the defense are of publishable quality in an appropriate A-/B-ranked conference or journal, or equivalent as determined by the Dissertation Committee. Articles may, but are not required to, have been published

before the defense. **However; if so, the student must obtain copyright permission from the publishing journal to include the article in his/her dissertation, as required by U.S law.** When asking for permission to include the article in the dissertation, students should notify the journal editor that the dissertation will be made available on-line. Students must secure all copyright permissions before finalizing and formatting the dissertation. Some journals might have copyright requirements that make it not worth the trouble to include that specific article in the dissertation.

    a. **Include copyright information on the title page at the bottom or a separate page following the title page.**
    b. **Include written permissions as an appendix at the end of the thesis/dissertation.**

7. To count toward the dissertation, conferences or journals to which articles may be submitted for publication must be either A- or B-ranked, or equivalent as determined by the Dissertation Committee, in the appropriate field

8. Students must be first author on a minimum of three articles that will count towards the dissertation. As first authors, students are responsible for development and articulation of a concept or idea for research, development of a proposal to pursue this idea, development of a research design, conducting research and analysis, writing major portions of a manuscript, designing an intervention or assessment (if relevant), and interpreting results. Any co-authors must be identified at the student's proposal defense.

9. If an article is rejected by a journal during the dissertation process, the student may submit to another journal approved by the dissertation committee. In the case of a revise and resubmit during the dissertation process, any changes to the article must be approved by the dissertation committee. Co-authorship will not be changed for a revise and resubmit.

10. If an article is rejected by a journal after the successful completion and defense of the dissertation, co-authorship decisions that were made during the dissertation process will remain in effect, unless a committee member chooses to remove themselves from the article. Submission to a new journal will be at the discretion of the dissertation committee. Also, after the successful dissertation defense, any new submission or resubmission, including changes in the authorship or article content, will be at the discretion of the Dissertation Chair. These decisions made after the successful completion and defense of the dissertation will not impact or be tied to the awarding of the degree.

11. The dissertation proposal must include:
    a. The introductory chapter.
    b. Copies of any completed articles, whether first author or not.
    c. An outline of ongoing research and any articles in progress.
    d. A list of intended conferences or journals for article submission.
    e. A timeline for completion of the work.

The dissertation proposal defense is similar to the proposal defense for a traditional dissertation. The three-article dissertation alters the format, but not the content, expected in the dissertation research.

12. If the journal reviewers suggest modifications to any of the 3 submitted manuscripts prior to the dissertation defense, your plan for addressing those suggestions should be shared with your Dissertation Chair or co-authors of the paper and approved by them before you enact the changes. Changes can be made to any of the 3 manuscripts provided that the Dissertation Chair and committee members are aware of and agree to the changes being made and their rationale. Students should make the changes requested by a journal to which they have submitted an article and resubmit the updated article during the review period established by the journal, unless otherwise approved by the Dissertation Chair.

Clarification of Guidelines for the Three-Article Dissertation
1. In the case of co-authorship on any individual chapters within the dissertation, the student must indicate the percentage of effort <u>and</u> description of the role played by each author in the introductory chapter to the dissertation.
2. It is acceptable for a student to include a previously published conference paper or journal article in the three-article dissertation, as long as (a) all authorship requirements in the School of Computer's guidelines are adhered to, and (b) the dissertation committee agrees to the manuscript's inclusion as an integrated and substantial chapter of the dissertation.
3. The School of Computing will defer to the judgment of the dissertation committee as long as there is cohesiveness of the three-article dissertation with sufficient explanation as needed regarding the student's contributions in the case of co-authorship on a given article.

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