# **Setting a Production Schedule for Your Dissertation**

Setting a realistic production schedule requires that you know program requirements, graduate school requirements, research protocol limitations, and personal writing habits and abilities. This document can be used to help you sort through all of those categories so that the production schedule you set will be realistic.

When seeking out the following information, you can consult several resources. It is suggested that you consult multiple resources if you have them available to you. This might include, though is not limited to, 1) seeking out information online for your graduate school’s specific formatting guidelines, 2) consulting your program’s graduate student manual or handbook that may contain relevant information, and 3) reaching out to your advisor or the appropriate contact in your department and/or specific program to ask about expectations and requirements.

## **Program Requirements**

* What, if any, are the program requirements for formatting?
* What are the program requirements for content?
* Who in the program do you consult with if you have questions about these regulations?
* Are there program deadlines that are different than the graduate school deadlines (e.g., amount of time committees have to read the dissertation before the defense)?
* What does your advisor think is feasible with respect to the production timeline (e.g., allowing time for feedback and revision before the final defense)?
* Are there dissertations by graduates of the department or by your advisor’s former students that you can reference?
* Is there a graduate student handbook or manual you can consult?

## **Graduate School Requirements**

* What are the formatting requirements for a dissertation? You can streamline the dissertation process by **starting** your writing in the format that will be required for deposit. If you begin by using shared, cloud-based documents to collaborate or share updates with an advisor or writing group, you may have to spend time at the end reformatting the entire document to fulfill the formatting requirements. This can be mitigated by using document styles from early on or by hiring a formatter.
* Is there a template you can reference as you write? Consult the graduate school’s website or a point person in the graduate school who can provide you with a formatting template.
* What are the deadlines imposed by the graduate school? The graduate school has deadlines for depositing that change depending on your course status the semester in which you defend.
* What are the limitations on consulting appointments? You will likely need to consult with someone in the deposit office to ensure that your formatting is correct.

## **Research Protocol Limitations**

* How long will it take to submit and receive approval for any required IRB?
* How long will it take to conduct the research (e.g., recruit subjects, carry out interviews, run laboratory experiments, collect materials from archives, develop computer programs, etc.)?
* Will a pilot version be needed before the official dissertation research begins?
* What parts of the dissertation can be written up while the research is still under way (e.g., can you write the methods while still collecting data?)?
* Will current funding cover the cost of the entire dissertation process, or will you have to spend time applying for grants, etc.?

## **Personal Writing Habits and Abilities**

* How many pages/paragraphs can you write in one hour?
* What is the quality of that writing (i.e., will it need significant revising/polishing?)?
* When is your most productive time of day to write?
* Do you write-to-think (i.e., figure out what you want to say by trying to write it) or do you think-first-then-write (i.e., spend significant amounts of time putting it all together in your head before committing it to the page)? The former will likely require more time at the end to revise; the latter will require more time in the beginning to think.

## **Possible Steps in the Dissertation Process**

Below is a list of possible steps you will take as you work on your dissertation. Think about how long the various steps might take. Note that to the right of each item. Put proposed completion dates in the left column to create a tentative production schedule. You may have already completed some of the steps—just write those dates in. As you fill out this form, you might consider working with an advisor or another graduate student who is further along on their dissertation timeline to offer some guidance.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Proposed Completion Date** | **Necessary Steps** | **Time necessary for completion** | **Page Allotment** |
|  | Determine what you will research & how you will research it |  |  |
|  | Receive approval for your plan |  |  |
|  | Conduct the research (might involve IRB submission, soliciting funding, recruiting subjects, collecting data, searching archives, etc.) |  |  |
|  | Background reading of literature |  |  |
|  | Write a chapter (specify which chapter) |  |  |
|  | Receive feedback on that chapter (This may include your advisor, a writing group, the Writing Lab, peers, etc.) |  |  |
|  | Revise that chapter |  |  |
|  | Write a chapter (specify which chapter) |  |  |
|  | Receive feedback on that chapter (This may include your advisor, a writing group, the Writing Lab, peers, etc.) |  |  |
|  | Revise that chapter |  |  |
|  | Write a chapter (specify which chapter) |  |  |
|  | Receive feedback on that chapter (This may include your advisor, a writing group, the Writing Lab, peers, etc.) |  |  |
|  | Revise that chapter |  |  |
| **Continued on Reverse 🡪** | | | |
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|  | Write a chapter (specify which chapter) |  |  |
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|  | Revise that chapter |  |  |
|  | Write a chapter (specify which chapter) |  |  |
|  | Receive feedback on that chapter (This may include your advisor, a writing group, the Writing Lab, peers, etc.) |  |  |
|  | Revise that chapter |  |  |
|  | Revise the entire document to be sure all parts work together |  |  |
|  | Receive feedback on the entire document |  |  |
|  | Revise entire document based on that feedback |  |  |
|  | Format according to requirements |  |  |
|  | Check formatting with the graduate school |  |  |
|  | Final Proofreading |  |  |
|  | Deliver to the committee |  |  |
|  | Defend |  |  |
|  | Revise based on defense requirements |  |  |
|  | Final Proofreading |  |  |
|  | Deposit |  |  |