



## **Guidelines for a Health Services Research and Policy PhD Thesis Document**

### **1. Purpose of this document:**

This document provides a guide for the structure and content of a Health Services Research and Policy (HSRP) PhD thesis document. Because HSRP theses topics and methods vary greatly, the requirements for any given thesis may vary from the guidelines presented here as is required to facilitate coherent presentation. However, notwithstanding such exceptions, the structure and content provided below is the standard for an HSRP thesis at the University of Rochester.

This document is meant to be a supplement to the general guidelines of the University of Rochester for preparation of a thesis (THE PREPARATION OF DOCTORAL THESES: A MANUAL FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS), which can be found at the website: <http://www.rochester.edu/Theses/ThesesManual.pdf>, and which governs all theses at this university. This guideline does not supersede the general guidelines.

### **2. Overview of thesis contents**

A thesis is a description and interpretation of the research conducted by the candidate that qualifies him/her for the degree of PhD.

It is written for non-specialized scientists. Specifically, every member of the thesis examination committee must be able to read and understand the document as a whole, and the details of each section must be understandable to at least one committee member with the expertise to verify its content is sound. Specialist terms need to be explained or avoided.

It is written in English with correct spelling and grammar. It is not the job of the committee to proof-read the text. Having the text of the thesis corrected and edited for clarity by a second person is acceptable and highly recommended. A committee member can refuse to accept a thesis with excessive grammatical or graphical errors.

There is no formal minimum or maximum length; however, the thesis must give an in-depth account of the research question addressed or phenomenon explained, its policy or clinical importance, and a detailed description of the research.

### **3. Sections of the thesis**

The Graduate School's manual titled "The Preparation of Doctoral Theses" outlines the overall structure of the thesis in terms of general formatting and required parts such as



Title Page, Abstract, etc. See The Preparation of Doctoral Theses manual for specifications regarding these components. The graduate school's manual does not address the substantive chapters of the thesis. That guidance is provided herein.

A Health Services Research and Policy thesis will typically contain five chapters:

1. Introduction, which introduces the research question, provides the requisite arguments to establish its importance as a health services research topic, and briefly summarizes the research approach to the thesis.
2. Background, which provides the information necessary to understanding what is currently known and what needs to be known regarding the research question. This chapter also describes underlying theories, the development of explanations, and the description of substantive parameters of interest and any substantive hypotheses.
3. Methods, which details the study design, data, and analytical methods that were used in the research. This chapter will also provide the identification of structural parameters of interest with empirical parameters to be estimated and the translation of substantive hypotheses into empirical hypotheses. Results of specification tests used to determine the statistically adequate model used to empirically address hypotheses or identify parameters can be included in this section.
4. Results, which reports the empirical results of applying the methods to address the research question.
5. Discussion, which briefly outlines the dissertation topic, and then provides an interpretation of the results in light of the research question, integrates the results and interpretation with existing literature, discusses any limitations of the methods in addressing the research question, and provides a concluding section that addresses broad policy implications and future research.