

Stage 1: Brainstorming Your Research Topic

Task	Deadline	Revised Deadline	
Identify the type of study (quantitative, qualitative, mixed).			<input type="checkbox"/>
Create a reading list.			<input type="checkbox"/>
List the seminal research papers/studies or theoretical models.			<input type="checkbox"/>
Identify three limitations to the existing literature that your project will address.			<input type="checkbox"/>
Identify research questions.			<input type="checkbox"/>
Identify your study variables.			<input type="checkbox"/>
Schedule a meeting with my supervisor			<input type="checkbox"/>

Stage 2: Finalize Research Topic

Task	Deadline	Revised Deadline	
Review meeting notes.			<input type="checkbox"/>
Update literature reading and seminal research lists.			<input type="checkbox"/>
Finalize the three limitations.			<input type="checkbox"/>
Finalize the sample population for your project.			<input type="checkbox"/>
Review and finalize research questions and hypotheses.			<input type="checkbox"/>
Review and finalize your study variables.			<input type="checkbox"/>
Identify the mode of data collection.			<input type="checkbox"/>
Identify the measures/assessment tools.			<input type="checkbox"/>
Schedule a meeting with my supervisor			<input type="checkbox"/>
Revise research proposal idea after the meeting.			<input type="checkbox"/>

Stage 3: Data collection

Task	Deadline	Revised Deadline	
Finalize research design and methodology.			<input type="checkbox"/>
Submit IRB application.			<input type="checkbox"/>
Finalize data collection tools.			<input type="checkbox"/>
Pilot test instruments.			<input type="checkbox"/>
Create a data management plan.			<input type="checkbox"/>
Schedule data collection timeline.			<input type="checkbox"/>
Record data accurately and securely.			<input type="checkbox"/>
De-identify data as soon as feasible.			<input type="checkbox"/>
Document any deviations from data collection plan.			<input type="checkbox"/>
Double-check data entries.			<input type="checkbox"/>

Code and clean data.			<input type="checkbox"/>
Backup all data in secure, redundant locations.			<input type="checkbox"/>
Log and store any field notes or memos.			<input type="checkbox"/>
Maintain audit trail (dates, changes, unexpected issues).			<input type="checkbox"/>

Stage 4: Writing the Dissertation

Introduction	Deadline	Revised Deadline	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clearly state the problem or phenomenon of interest.			<input type="checkbox"/>
Describe the broader context and rationale for the study.			<input type="checkbox"/>
Identify gaps in existing literature.			<input type="checkbox"/>
Articulate the significance and relevance of the study.			<input type="checkbox"/>
Define key terms and concepts.			<input type="checkbox"/>
Present the study purpose and/or specific aims.			<input type="checkbox"/>
Provide a brief overview of the dissertation structure.			<input type="checkbox"/>
Current Study	Deadline	Revised Deadline	<input type="checkbox"/>
Summarize how your study builds on prior literature.			<input type="checkbox"/>
Justify the methodological approach.			<input type="checkbox"/>
Clearly present your conceptual framework or theoretical model.			<input type="checkbox"/>
Clearly state the problem or phenomenon of interest.			<input type="checkbox"/>
Reiterate study aims, research questions, and hypotheses.			<input type="checkbox"/>
Clarify how this specific study fits within a larger project (if applicable)			<input type="checkbox"/>
Methods: Study Design	Deadline	Revised Deadline	<input type="checkbox"/>
Identify the study type (qualitative, quantitative, mixed).			<input type="checkbox"/>
Justify methodological approach.			<input type="checkbox"/>
Methods: Participants	Deadline	Revised Deadline	<input type="checkbox"/>
Describe the population and sample.			<input type="checkbox"/>
Detail eligibility/inclusion/exclusion criteria.			<input type="checkbox"/>
Explain sampling strategy (purposive, random, convenience).			<input type="checkbox"/>
Include recruitment procedures.			<input type="checkbox"/>
Methods: Procedures	Deadline	Revised Deadline	<input type="checkbox"/>
Describe the data collection process in detail.			<input type="checkbox"/>
Include timeline, setting, and steps taken.			<input type="checkbox"/>
Address informed consent and ethical considerations.			<input type="checkbox"/>

Methods: Measures & Instruments	Deadline	Revised Deadline	<input type="checkbox"/>
List all tools, surveys, interview guides used.			<input type="checkbox"/>
Describe each measure's purpose, reliability, and validity.			<input type="checkbox"/>
Methods: Data Analysis	Deadline	Revised Deadline	<input type="checkbox"/>
Explain how data were prepared and analyzed.			<input type="checkbox"/>
Justify the chosen analytic approach.			<input type="checkbox"/>
Identify software used.			<input type="checkbox"/>
Describe steps taken to ensure rigor/trustworthiness (for qualitative).			<input type="checkbox"/>
Results	Deadline	Revised Deadline	<input type="checkbox"/>
Present findings clearly and logically.			<input type="checkbox"/>
Report participant characteristics.			<input type="checkbox"/>
Use tables/figures effectively and appropriately.			<input type="checkbox"/>
Report main findings for each research question/hypothesis.			<input type="checkbox"/>
Include appropriate statistical results (e.g., pvalues, confidence intervals) or qualitative themes with representative quotes.			<input type="checkbox"/>
Ensure all data are anonymized.			<input type="checkbox"/>
Avoid interpreting results in this section (save for discussion).			<input type="checkbox"/>
Discussion and Implications/Future Directions	Deadline	Revised Deadline	<input type="checkbox"/>
Interpret the results in relation to research questions.			<input type="checkbox"/>
Link findings to existing literature.			<input type="checkbox"/>
Discuss theoretical and practical implications.			<input type="checkbox"/>
Acknowledge limitations of the study.			<input type="checkbox"/>
Reflect on unexpected findings.			<input type="checkbox"/>
Suggest directions for future research.			<input type="checkbox"/>
Reiterate the significance and contribution of my work.			<input type="checkbox"/>
Additional Sections	Deadline	Revised Deadline	<input type="checkbox"/>
Abstract.			<input type="checkbox"/>
Acknowledgments.			<input type="checkbox"/>
Table of Contents, List of Tables/Figures.			<input type="checkbox"/>
Appendices (e.g., measures, recruitment materials, IRB approval).			<input type="checkbox"/>

Stage 5: Defend Dissertation & Celebrate!

Before the Defense (4–6 Weeks Prior)	Deadline	Revised Deadline	<input type="checkbox"/>
Schedule your defense date/time with your committee.			<input type="checkbox"/>
Reserve a room and/or set up Zoom/online platform.			<input type="checkbox"/>
Confirm AV/tech setup.			<input type="checkbox"/>
Finalize three limitations to existing literature that my project will address.			<input type="checkbox"/>
Review committee members' availability and university deadlines.			<input type="checkbox"/>
Format your dissertation draft according to university guidelines.			<input type="checkbox"/>
Submit dissertation draft to committee (check how many weeks in advance they need it)			<input type="checkbox"/>
Practice your presentation (time it!).			<input type="checkbox"/>
Week of the Defense	Deadline	Revised Deadline	<input type="checkbox"/>
Email committee a reminder with logistics.			<input type="checkbox"/>
Prepare your attire (professional but comfortable).			<input type="checkbox"/>
Backup your presentation (USB, cloud, email).			<input type="checkbox"/>
Test Zoom/AV setup again.			<input type="checkbox"/>
Bring water, notes, and anything else I may need.			<input type="checkbox"/>
Arrange for someone to attend or assist.			<input type="checkbox"/>
Breathe and rest well the night before.			<input type="checkbox"/>
Print out a hardcopy of the defense form that requires committee members signature to certify dissertation completion!			<input type="checkbox"/>
Day of the Defense	Deadline	Revised Deadline	<input type="checkbox"/>
Complete any required dissertation revisions			<input type="checkbox"/>
Submit the final approved version to the graduate school.			<input type="checkbox"/>
Submit all required forms.			<input type="checkbox"/>
Email thank-you notes to your committee members.			<input type="checkbox"/>
Update CV, ORCID, and research profiles.			<input type="checkbox"/>
Celebration Planning: Beforehand	Deadline	Revised Deadline	<input type="checkbox"/>
Invite close friends/family to defense or to wait for you after.			<input type="checkbox"/>
Order or make a cake/treat.			<input type="checkbox"/>
Consider symbolic celebration: cap & gown photos, journal post, playlist, etc..			<input type="checkbox"/>
Celebration Planning: After	Deadline	Revised Deadline	<input type="checkbox"/>
Take time off to rest and celebrate.			<input type="checkbox"/>
Plan a bigger celebration.			<input type="checkbox"/>

Reflect or journal about your doctoral journey.			<input type="checkbox"/>
Thank those who supported you.			<input type="checkbox"/>
Frame your diploma and/or dissertation cover page.			<input type="checkbox"/>
Celebrate your new title!			<input type="checkbox"/>