

## **TIME FRAME and Step by Step Guide to the Azrieli Dissertation Process**

### PHASE I – TOPIC SELECTION, CONCEPTUALIZATION AND PRELIMINARY SCHOLARSHIP

*This can be accomplished at any time after completing the first year of the program.*

#### **Timeline**

During the summer of the first year of the program students will complete their first capstone project. This project provides students with the opportunity to explore different possible dissertation topics.

Our goal is that the second capstone, completed in summer of year two, will help students narrow their focus to a specific topic and area of inquiry. Over the course of their third year, students will hone that topic, and assemble a committee, starting with a dissertation chair.

#### **Topic choice**

- Consider a Topic or Area of Inquiry
  - May be outgrowth of area of study in a course or something you generate on your own. It can also be an extension of a professor's research project.
    - *Save references and papers from classes – consider choosing related paper topics for several courses to facilitate deeper knowledge in an area of study*
  - May be in conjunction with existing faculty or other research projects/data bases from outside of Azrieli
    - *Consider agencies and programs that may have data on topics of interest to you*
  - May be outgrowth of prior Azrieli dissertations
    - *Review Azrieli dissertations, consider reading several that interest you. All are available on the YU Library website.*
- Conduct preliminary and brief literature search and review (this is something that you will be asked to do during the capstones, but which you will want to extend).
  - Ideally, through scholarship in an area, and review of what has already been done in the field, you will uncover a logical and important question to address
    - *Take advantage of the librarians at the YU library for help finding sources*
- Have preliminary discussions/meetings with faculty who share interest in area of study

- If you are having difficulty at this stage and would like to brainstorm ideas, move from ideas to a more specific but do-able projects, feel free to reach out to Dean Berger or the doctoral director, Professor Moshe Krakowski.

## PHASE II – FIND A COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSON AND COMMITTEE

Over the course of your third year of classes you should be honing your topic and considering which faculty member will serve as your chair. Dr. Krakowski will help you with this—feel free to reach out at any time.

Once you have secured a dissertation chair you should assemble a committee together with your chair and have the committee and topic approved by the doctoral director. Make sure that at least one person on your committee is a methodologist—someone whose expertise lies in the type of research methodology you will be using.

At this point there is a form that must be filled out (available online) and signed by you, your chair, and the doctoral director. In order to fill out this form and proceed with your project it is essential that you:

1. Have no incomplete grades
2. Have completed more than half of your coursework

Any form filled out without these conditions in place will not be accepted.

## PHASE III – PROPOSAL DEVELOPMENT

By the end of your third year of classes, you should be turning to the proposal.

Before you begin a proposal you should:

- A. Have a fairly well conceived notion of what you want to study and some idea of the methodology or project design
- B. Ideally, be able to cite pertinent previous work, such as prior dissertations or published articles/books

## **Composing the Literature Review**

1. For purposes of the proposal – literature review does not need to be totally completed but must be sufficient for committee to approve your project, and for IRB submission

2. The process of writing the literature review often entails writing subsections and doing multiple rewrites. It is strongly recommended that students and chairs discuss the style of working that will be most efficient – i.e. should they schedule regular meetings? Will the chair want to review brief segments, or large sections?
3. Unless otherwise decided in advance by the committee, the chairperson will act as both gatekeeper and primary mentor through the entire dissertation process. As such, all work should be submitted first to the chairperson and only forwarded to the committee when the work is relatively polished. The chair may request that a committee member review preliminary work because it is in their area of expertise.
4. Develop research questions
5. You may want to consult with an outside methodologist to help with aspects of the study plan. For example, you may wish to consult with a statistician to complete power analysis, if appropriate. (IRB requires a power analysis for quantitative research.)

### **Complete Proposal and Share with Committee**

A complete proposal includes an introduction, literature review, research questions, methods section, conclusion, and references.

(See “AGS - Dissertation Proposal Outline” on the website for a complete breakdown of the pieces of the proposal.)

### **Defend Proposal to Committee**

1. Proposal defense must be scheduled a minimum of 2 weeks in advance, and at discretion of committee chair
2. Doctoral program office must be notified of defense date
3. Student will present a brief synopsis (5 - 10 minutes) of project, and respond to comments of the committee
4. As a result of the defense, all parties should be in agreement as to the nature, breadth and procedure for project, and all parties must complete and sign the “Proposal Defense Form” located at our Azrieli Student Resources website

### **Submit Proposal to IRB**

Students must have completed the on-line course on Human Subjects Investigation prior to opening an IRB application.

Yeshiva University uses Western IRB as to oversee research ethics. Students must submit IRB proposals using the WIRB portal (<https://connexus.wcgirb.com/>), and as subordinates to their

*advisors*. This means that advisors are always the P.I. on any study. You can log into your advisor's account and create the application, putting the advisor as the P.I. and yourself as a researcher on the project.

It is best to apply for IRB exemption if at all possible. Please see the guidelines on the IRB website to determine whether you will be eligible for exemption. Even if exempt you will still need to get the IRB to confirm the exemption.

See: <https://www.wcgirb.com/how-to-submit/irb-forms/> for more information on the submission process.

If you are working on a project that already has IRB approval, make sure your advisor adds you as an additional researcher on the IRB forms.

#### PHASE IV – RESEARCH STUDY – DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

BEFORE INITIATING ANY RESEARCH, STUDENTS MUST:

- A. Have successfully defended the proposal to their committee
- B. Obtain approval (or exemption) from IRB
- C. Ensure they will be using only approved IRB consent and data collection forms and procedures

After these steps have been completed you can conduct your research. Make sure to check with your advisor as you conduct the research to ensure that you are not making any mistakes that might complicate, or even invalidate the study.

#### PHASE V – DISSERTATION WRITING

To Complete the Dissertation Process Students Must:

- A. Write additional sections, including:
  - Results
  - Discussion and limitations
  - Conclusion
- B. Rewrite/update methods section
  - Students may elect to consult with a statistician for assistance
- C. Add an abstract and acknowledgements
- D. Expand and make necessary adjustments to the literature review
- E. Check references for APA formatting
- F. Receive approval of document from chair

*See dissertation guidelines document on website for a more complete guide to the structure and content of the dissertation.*

- G. After chair's approval, document can be sent to the committee
- Based on arrangement with chair and committee, committee may be sent sections separately (i.e. results, then discussion, etc.) or when the document is fully assembled
  - Students and faculty should make every attempt to respond quickly to drafts and comments. *Students can generally expect that work that they submit will be reviewed within a month.*
- H. When informed by a chair and committee that the document is acceptable for defense, the student should contact the doctoral program director
- I. Every defense must have (minimally) two outside readers, in addition to the committee, both of whom should be doctorates themselves, unless an exception is granted by the director. The student may suggest these readers, however readers are invited and appointed by the Program Director.
- a. One of the outside readers can come from the field of practice (i.e. a school administrator, school psychologist) and one should hold an academic, university or research position.
  - b. Students will be informed when the outside readers have agreed to participate, and will be responsible for forwarding copies of their final paper to those readers.

PHASE VI – FINAL DEFENSE, FINAL EDIT/FORMATTING, GRADUATION

**Students need to file a [Graduation Application](#) with the Azrieli Academic Administrator before their final defense.**

To Complete the Dissertation, Students Must:

- A. Determine defense date
  - a. Students may defend in person or via zoom
  - b. Student and chair are responsible for determining a date and time acceptable to the entire committee. **Ideally, the defense should be scheduled one month in advance.** Participation via Zoom is possible for committee members and readers.
- B. Complete oral defense, which includes:
  - a. Brief (10 - 15 minute) student presentation of the dissertation, usually focusing on the results obtained and a discussion of their meaning and implications.

- b. Committee members, outside readers, the dean and program director, and chairperson make comments, pose questions, and offer recommendations for changes, to which the student will be given the opportunity to reply.
  - c. The committee will deliberate the following options:
    - i. Reject dissertation
    - ii. Accept with major revisions
    - iii. Accept with minor revisions
    - iv. Accept with no changes
- C. The student is responsible thereafter to implement the changes recommended/required at defense.

*It is the student's responsibility to note the comments/concerns/recommendations at the defense, and work with chairperson after the defense to make necessary changes.*

*Generally, the committee agrees to have all further edits and changes reviewed and approved by the chairperson alone.*

- D. The student must assure proper formatting of dissertation and submit final copies to the appropriate university official after receiving approval from the Chair.
- a. The student is responsible for contacting the Office of the Registrar to ascertain current university regulations re: format of final dissertation (i.e. margins, number of hard copies to be submitted), and to submit dissertation and graduation paperwork to the appropriate university offices.
  - b. Graduation/Degree Conferral dates are: May 30, September. 30, January 30. The final version must be filed and uploaded by the conferral date to meet that graduation date.
  - c. The student should inform the director of the doctoral program when final materials have been submitted.
- E. MAZAL TOV! ON TO COMMENCEMENT!