

Sample Chapter 1 and 3 Outlines

CHAPTER 1

In this section, you will introduce your readers to the issue you are exploring. Be sure to make your first sentence a compelling “hook.” State the major thesis that guides your study.

Problem Statement

In this section you will provide a concise statement of the problem in just a few paragraphs.

Conceptual/Theoretical Framework for PhD / Statement of Context for EdD

Here you will make a case for the proposed relationship between the variables under study.

Example of Level Three Heading

It may be helpful to provide your readers with subheading to guide them through your argument. This will be even more important in Chapter 2 than in Chapter 1.

Section Headings

If you divide your section using subheading, be sure to include at least two at any given level.

Research Questions

After a brief introduction, list your questions in a numbered list. These research questions, worded in exactly the same way, will be repeated at the beginning of Chapter 3.

Significance of the Study

Here, you will make a case for why the problem you have proposed to study is both interesting (contestable) and important (negative consequence will be avoided or positive consequences will ensue with the information that may be gained from your study).

Definitions of Terms

Provide your readers with constitutive definitions of any specialized terms that you use, especially those that may have multiple definitions in the literature. You may quote specific authors whose work you may be following. This is not the place to discuss operational definitions (i.e., measures of your constructs). These will be provided in Chapter 3.

CHAPTER 3

You'll probably start with a brief introduction, stating once again the purpose of your study.

Research Questions

Provide a brief introduction linking what you presented in Chapter 2 to your research questions. Then list your research questions exactly as they were listed in Chapter 1.

Method

You should avoid "stacking" headings one of top of the other with no intervening text. Describe the nature of your study (e.g., mixed methods, quasi-experimental, program evaluation, etc.)

Participants

Tell who you plan to invite to participate in your study. Be as specific as you can at this point.

Data Sources

Describe the nature of the data you will use to answer your research questions. Again, avoid stacking headings.

Measure one. Describe your survey in detail, including the number of items in each section, the response scale, any available validity and reliability information, as well one or two sample items.

Measure two. Provide the same information for each measure you will use in your study, including extant student achievement data from SOLs.

Interview protocol. If your study is qualitative in nature, you will describe your interview protocol for individual or focus group interviews. You may provide a copy of the complete list of questions you will ask in an appendix.

Document analysis. Describe any documents or other artifacts that will be part of your study, as well as any other data sources you plan to use.

Data Collection

Describe how you will recruit participants to your study, including any incentives you will offer. Be specific about your data collection plan.

Data Analysis

Describe specifically how you plan to analyze your data. It is helpful to provide a table that lists each research question along with the data sources and the data analysis that you plan to use to answer each question. See Table 1.

Table 1

Include the Title of the Table on a Separate Line

Research Question	Data Sources	Data Analysis
Question 1		
Question 2		

Question 3

Question 4

Ethical Considerations

Describe the procedures you will follow to secure appropriate permissions to conduct your study through the W&M Education Institutional Review Board (EDIRC) and to protect your participants from any potential harm.

Assumptions, Delimitations, and Limitations

Describe the underlying assumptions of the research method or approach that you are selected for your study. The delimitations and limitations sections of your research proposal describe situations and circumstances that may affect or restrict your methods and analysis of research data.

Delimitations define the parameters of the investigation. In educational research the delimitations will frequently deal with such items as population/sample, treatment(s), setting, and instrumentation. Delimitations are choices made by the researcher which should be mentioned. They describe the boundaries that you have set for the study. Limit your delimitations to the things that a reader might reasonably expect you to do but that you, for clearly explained reasons, have decided not to do.

Limitations are influences that the researcher cannot control. They are the shortcomings, conditions or influences that cannot be controlled by the researcher that place restrictions on your methods and conclusions. Any limitations that might influence the results should be mentioned. You might consider limitations affecting the instruments you utilized, the sample, your analysis,

the nature of self-reporting, time constraints, and limitations to the generalizability of the findings.