



CAPELLA UNIVERSITY

The New Dissertation Process

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Overview of Presentation

- We are excited to begin transitioning some learners to the new dissertation process over the next several months in anticipation of the launch of broader changes in 2013.
- To that end, a subset of learners who are currently working on Milestones 3, 4 and 5 will receive the first detailed communication about process changes on Monday.
- In advance of that communication, we wanted to adequately prepare you to answer questions and help your learners make good decisions about their own next steps. Below are the most important things for you to be aware of at this time. Additional details on other changes will be forthcoming in the next weeks and months.

- **The most important change for you to be aware of right now is that learners are no longer required to complete a three-chapter proposal as part of their dissertation approval process.**

The New Process

- **Instead, they will:**
- **Present a research plan to obtain Scientific Merit Review (SMR) approval, which ensures that their dissertation addresses a meaningful topic and that their proposed design and methodology is sound.**
- **Then seek Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, which addresses the protection of their research participants in accordance with established ethical practices.**

Once they have received SMR and IRB approval, learners will have a pre-data collection call with their committee and then can begin collecting data and get a head start on writing their dissertation.

- **If you are working with a learner who has received Full SMR approval**

These learners are in a position to proceed directly to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) process. This is an exciting, major step forward for learners who have SMR approval but have also been working on their three-chapter proposal. To be clear, these learners are **no longer** required to complete the three-chapter proposal and instead should begin preparing their IRB submission. They are being instructed to contact you to begin exploring IRB resources. This would be a good time to re-familiarize yourself with the Research Center resources at www.capella.edu/researchcenter. Some good guidance:

- Begin with the [IRB Submission Guide](#)
- Get an [overview of the IRB process](#)
- Check out Capella's [IRB A to Z Handbook](#)
- Locate [forms & templates](#)

Learners working on their SMRs

- **If you are working with learners who are pursuing SMR approval**
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- These learners should continue working toward their SMR approval. Learners who are simultaneously working on their proposal and SMR forms should discontinue work on the proposal and focus only on the SMR process at this time. Once they have received SMR approval, they will be able to move directly to the IRB process.

Learners Developing a Proposal

- **If you are working with learners who are developing a proposal and do not yet have SMR approval or have not begun the SMR process**
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- This is where your learners will need your help deciding how to proceed!

- **If you have a mentee who is currently working on a proposal and has not started an SMR, please initiate a discussion about the feasibility of receiving school approval of the proposal by the end of fall quarter (December 14).**
- If they are able to receive school approval of the proposal by that date, they will be able to proceed directly from there to the IRB process. This is recommended only for learners who are truly likely to complete all levels of proposal approval (mentor, committee and school) by December 14.

Learners still working toward mentor approval or who have not already received significant feedback and input from committee members are unlikely to be able to meet this deadline, so it is recommended that they begin working on the Scientific Merit Review process.

- **If you and your mentee decide that it is in the best interest of the learner to move to the SMR process now, please send an e-mail to dissertation@capella.edu, and your mentee can immediately begin working on their SMR.**
 - **Please be especially sure to remind these learners that the work they've put into the first three chapters of their dissertation has been time well spent.**

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 - Please be especially sure to remind these learners that the work they've put into the first three chapters of their dissertation has been time well spent.
 - **Those chapters are still a critical component of their dissertation and will become future milestones; learners who have made good progress on the proposal will be further along on those milestones later in the process.**

- **If you and your mentee decide that it is in the best interest of the learner to move to the SMR process now, please send an e-mail to dissertation@capella.edu, and your mentee can immediately begin working on their SMR.**
 - Please be especially sure to remind these learners that the work they've put into the first three chapters of their dissertation has been time well spent.
 - Those chapters are still a critical component of their dissertation and will become future milestones; learners who have made good progress on the proposal will be further along on those milestones later in the process.
- **Any questions about how to help your mentees through this transition or how the Ph.D. process changes impact your mentees can be directed to dissertation@capella.edu. The newly-created Dissertation Support Center is available to answer your questions and address your concerns.**

Questions and Concerns

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- 1. Carol Burnworth – approved SMR
- 2. Amy W. – how will this change affect milestone deadlines etc
- 3. When should the Committee members