WRITING THE INTRODUCTION OF YOUR THESIS/DISSERTATION

DR. KELSIE ENDICOTT
COORDINATOR OF THE GRADUATE WRITING CENTER

DISSERTATION COMPONENTS (OVERVIEW)

- Preliminary pages
- Chapters 1-5
- References
- Appendices

DISSERTATION: PRELIMINARY PAGES

- ❑ Dissertation Approval Sheet
- ❑ Title page
- ❑ Copyright page
- ❑ Abstract
- ❑ Dedication (optional)
- ❑ Acknowledgements (optional)
- ❑ Preface of Foreword (optional)
- ❑ Table of Contents
- ❑ List of Tables (if applicable)
- ❑ List of Figures (if applicable)
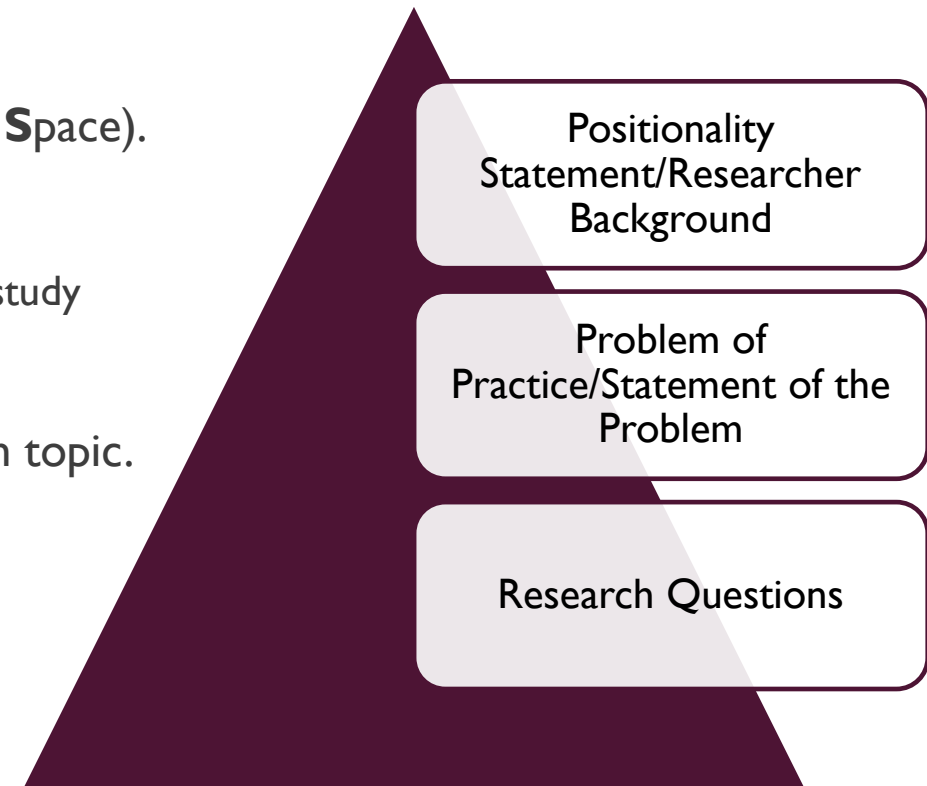- ❑ List of Plates (if applicable

UMES GENERAL GUIDELINES

☐	Chapter 1	Introduction to the Study or Statement of the Problem
☐	Chapter 2	Review of the Literature Theoretical or Conceptual Framework
☐	Chapter 3	Methodology of the Study *Ethical Practices – IRB Protocols *Sample, data collection, analysis, R & V
☐	Chapter 4	Results of the Study (quantitative) Findings of the Study (qualitative)
☐	Chapter 5	Discussion and Conclusions

(UMES theses and dissertation guide, 2015-2023)

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION (TO THE STUDY)/STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

- Purpose: Introduce readers to the topic of your research!

- You are essentially employing a CARS approach (**C**reating **A** **R**esearch **S**pace).

- By sharing your own context, you:

  - allow readers to make their own decisions about how you conducted the study

  - allow readers access into what informed your design and analytical choices

- Chapter 1 heavily emphasizes the rhetorical nature of your dissertation topic.

Positionality Statement/Researcher Background

Problem of Practice/Statement of the Problem

Research Questions

CHAPTER 1: POSITIONALITY STATEMENT/RESEARCHER BACKGROUND

- Typically includes:

    - a description of the researcher's lenses (such as their philosophical, personal, theoretical beliefs and perspective through which they view the research process)

    - potential influences on the research (such as age, political beliefs, social class, race, ethnicity, gender, religious beliefs, previous career)

    - the researcher's chosen or pre-determined position about the participants in the project (e.g., as an insider or an outsider)

    - the research-project context and an explanation as to how, where, when and in what way these might, may, or have, influenced the research process (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013)

    - can begin with an anecdote

CHAPTER 1: PROBLEM OF PRACTICE/STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

- A POP is a description of the issue/problem.

- Ex: "My problem of practice primarily investigates three kinds of dissonance regarding writing pedagogy with respect to feedback and revision: (1) the unfulfilled expectations of faculty that arise as a result of their pedagogical practices, (2) differing perceptions of feedback and revision between students and faculty, and (3) miscommunications between faculty and students. Collectively, these problems largely contribute to the challenges that college students experience when writing and to the belief that their writing skills are sub-par."

- Writing move: I explicitly call out what I see as the biggest contributors to the overall problem, which in my case is the feedback exchange primarily between instructors and students. Using numbers or letters as a form of breaking the problem down into its components is such a great visual guide for readers in terms of helping them "see" the problem in its complexity and holistically, so this is a writing move I strongly recommend.

CHAPTER 1: DEVELOPING RESEARCH QUESTIONS

What are you interested in researching?

Is there a "gap" in the literature on this topic?

Is the language of my RQ(s) precise?

Do my RQs align with my research methods?

Seek your advisers' input during this process!

EXAMPLE OF A RESEARCH QUESTION

- If my RQ is: *How do upper-level undergraduate students perceive the role of feedback on their written assignments?*

- I would probably be able to answer that question *most* effectively by **conducting interviews** with the specified population regarding their thoughts and perceptions of what feedback does, or doesn't do, for them when they receive it their written assignments.

- A **survey** could work as well, but if I did that, I would probably need to follow up with interviews because surveys only ask close-ended questions (yes/no), and as we know, writing is pretty individualized and contextual, so the nuance of their responses wouldn't necessarily come through in their survey answers.

- **Questionnaires** are slightly different. You could ask open-ended questions.

QUESTIONS?

CHAPTER 1 WRITING RESOURCES

- Dr. Kelsie Endicott, kjendicott@umes.edu

- https://wwwcp.umes.edu/grad/graduate-writing-center/

- https://wwwcp.umes.edu/grad/writing-resources/

- Use models from your discipline to help you write!

SCAN ME