WRITING

FROM

A

TO

B

A Guide to Completing the
Dissertation Phase of Doctoral Studies

Keith Hjortshoj

Contents

The Admission to Candidacy Exam, or "A Exam," is one of the few common requirements among Cornell's diverse PhD programs. According to the Cornell Guide to Graduate Study, passing the A Exam means that you are "ready to present a dissertation." Before you can present a dissertation, of course, you have to produce one, and doing so is your main job description as a PhD candidate in transit between the A Exam and the B Exam. Passing the B Exam and ling an approved copy of the dissertation are the last common requirements for the PhD.

Producing a dissertation is therefore the main subject of this guide for those of you en route between the A and B Exams.

Because the dissertation is a complex written document that all successful PhD candidates must complete, writing is critically important in this last phase of doctoral work. For reasons explained in following sections, the process of completing a dissertation is normally di cult. Writing projects on a compa [-5(lo)] TJ [5(wing sectio)] TJ [5(ns,)] TJ [70(the pr)] TJ [10(oc

specialization, this association of writing difficulties with deficits in basic skills may also explain why studies of common problems in graduate education rarely mention struggles with "writing" as distinct causes of attrition or delay in doctoral

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To explain the ways in which you are in the same boat, despite di er

and disorienting at turning points—periods of transition—when we write in unfamiliar contexts or forms, to meet new sets of expectations.

To demystify and facilitate dissertation writing, therefore, we should identify the features of the transition that you must now negotiate, as doctoral candidates. What, exactly, are you in transition from and to?

Designating someone who has graduated but remains a student in some respects, the term "graduate student" indicates the transitional nature of this period in your development. Being a good graduate student means that you are e ectively becoming something else: a process of transformation from the status of a student to that of a professional research specialist, a scholar, and in many cases a teacher. In a doctoral program, this long period of transition typically continues for ve years or more, with changing implications as you complete graduate course requirements, become a doctoral candidate following the A Exam, and pursue dissertation research and writing.
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answers to a series of questions:

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 author, in relation to this audience?

Answers to these questions raise some other relevant questions about methods, time frames, and standards. In other words, when you understand the nature of a writing task, how can you get it done e ectively and e ciently, in the broader contexts of your lives, in ways that meet standards for nished writing of this kind? Without considering these rhetorical changes, you will tend to drift into dissertation work with an approach to writing and a sense of yourself as a writer based on past experience. New di culties you encounter can then seem to represent unique circumstances or insurmountable limits of your ability rather than common, identi able problems you can solve by deliber

of a dissertation in your eld by examining nished dissertations on le, as close as possible to the type of research you are doing and preferably those approved by your own advisors.

Your dissertation will remain at all stages a work in progress, providing working drafts, data, and ideas for future publications. E orts to avoid further revision at every stage or to include everything you know about the subject represent student writing strategies that will make the process unnecessarily slow and frustrating. In following sections, we will extend this analysis to other di erences between student writing and professional writing, with attention to focus, frame of reference, time management, and other factors relevant to getting complex writing projects done.

Rhetorical Differences Between Student and Professional Writing

In American research universities, the boundaries and rhetorical shifts between undergraduate and graduate studies are somewhat blurred. Like professional academic writing, student writing takes many forms, most of them based on the kinds of writing that college teachers do. Undergraduate lab reports resemble scientific research articles. Student research papers for literature, history, or sociology courses resemble research articles in those fields. Doctoral programs and advanced research facilities coexist in the same departments with undergraduate studies. Graduate advisors in these departments also teach and advise undergraduates. Some courses enroll both advanced undergraduates and entering graduate students. And many of you serve as teaching assistants in undergraduate courses. Undergraduates sometimes begin to adopt approaches to writing characteristic of real scholarship, especially in honors projects or co-authored articles with advisors. In turn, rhetorical features of "school writing" often continue into graduate studies, in papers and projects assigned in graduate-level courses.

The following contrasts therefore polarize rhetorical factors that can be difficult to observe in intermediate, overlapping contexts. Their purpose is not to criticize student writing or to distinguish good approaches from bad ones. As a rule, undergraduates produce writing in the way they do because the situations in which they write favor those approaches, not because their methods and motivations are "wrong." Descriptions of these contrasting positions will include some discussion of their implications for dissertation writers, who are moving between them.

The Rhetorical Features of Student Writing

Because assignments across the disciplines ask undergraduates to produce many types of writing, the What? question we posed earlier is most difficult to answer. Writing assignments in diverse courses, however, share some underlying rhetorical features that condition the ways students typically complete them.

Regardless of its form and eld of study, "school writing" is produced:

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With clear deadlines and limited time, student writers tend to postpone working on an assignment until the pressure builds, along with their incentives to produce writing quickly. Stakes and standards for the quality of this work are relatively low because an assigned paper counts only for some portion of a grade in one course. And because school writing mainly serves the purposes of learning (rather than the dissemination of knowledge or communication with broader audiences), it typically has no future beyond submission and grading. A Cornell PhD candidate therefore described the undergraduate papers he wrote as "a series of one-night stands."

College students typically assume that the skills and strategies they developed in undergraduate studies will serve their purposes in post-graduate studies and careers. Very few of these students are aware that the writing their teachers produce, especially for publication, results from fundamentally different processes, approaches, and motivations.

e Rhetorical Features of Professional Academic Writing

Although scholars, like undergraduates, produce many kinds of formal and informal writing, the projects most relevant to doctoral candidates are manuscripts for publication. In contrast with student writers, scholars produce manuscripts:

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 recognition, and credentials.

 ese rhetoric

R 5 ; 3 5 ( ] . 5 / , . & 3 5 - - of their work while producing it.

R 5 " . 0 , 5 . " 3 5 , 5 - 3 # (! 5 0 1 # & 8 5 change considerably before the work is published.

Scholars who have e ectively adapted to the realities of professional writing also keep their motivations fairly high and consistent in the time devoted to a project. Accepting that writing for publication is a substantial part of their job as scholars, and one that requires sustained attention, they schedule regular blocks of time for this work and avoid distractions during those blocks of time. If they wait for the right mood, for inspiration, or for their schedules to clear, they'll never get serious projects nished.

When scholars do not adapt their approaches to the unavoidable demands of publication, they typically develop what the psychologist Robert Boice described as "binge patterns of creative illness." In a comparative study of "binge writers" and "regular writers" among assistant professors, Boice argued that binge writing results from belief that the most creative, original work results from a combination of eccentric brilliance and intense, manic concentration. Writers of this type believed that "binges of writing o er special advantages, including loosened, brilliant thinking and rare opportunities for quick, e cient completions of long overdue projects." Boice observed that binges of writing often follow periods of procrastination or blocking that induce the feelings of pressure and desperation these writers consider necessary for productivity. By contrast, the "regular writers" in this study typically worked on writing projects at least three days each week in "relatively brief but regular sessions." ey were moderate in their expectations, in their feelings of "mild happiness" with their progress, and in their methods.

Assessing the results of these methods after a year, Boice found that "binge writers (a) accomplished far less writing overall, (b) got fewer editorial acceptances, (c) scored higher on the Beck Depression Inventory, and (d) listed fewer creative ideas for writing" in the judgment of their peers.

Although Boice argued that binge writing results from widely held, romantic beliefs that extraordinary writing cannot result from ordinary minds and methods, we can usually trace the origins of academic binge writing under pressure to undergraduate writing methods. A majority of undergraduates are binge writers who postpone writing assignments until deadlines loom, pressure builds, and motivations rise. Graduate students who procrastinate and struggle to complete writing projects often report that they cannot concentrate and sustain attention to their work in what should be the best conditions: when they are feeling fresh, unhurried, and relaxed. Habituate(-9in)] T

nished writing in the rst draft through the sobering experience of publication. Due to high standards driven by intense competition, manuscripts that have even marginal prospects for acceptance have been thoroughly revised through multiple drafts. Following peer review, many of these are rejected and must be further revised for submission to other journals or publishers. Even acceptances are almost invariably provisional, requiring signi cant changes in response to diverse and often con icting criticism from reviewers. When a book manuscript is nally "done," and the author never wants to see it again, the copy editors work it over and the text staggers back like the undead, marked with hundreds of suggestions for editorial changes.

When you begin to compose a dissertation, a book manuscript, or a journal article, such an awareness of the process can be daunting and disheartening if you still believe that good writing represents brilliant utterance. e end of the process tells you that even your best e orts at the beginning won't be good enough. What you say now will probably be no more than the basis for saying something else instead.

If you abandon such romantic ideas of good writing, however, this realization can also be liberating. Considering all the revision and copy editing that occurs even at the end of a professional writing project, it seems silly, even vain, to think that those rst drafts eventually buried in scrap les were precious or intact. First drafts, and even later ones, don't have to be wonderful. Writing doesn't have to be a stressful performance before an imagined audience of scathing critics. Even the referees of a manuscript won't read its early versions. When you are producing them, therefore, you are actually quite free to say whatever occurs to you, without feeling that it has to be profound, eloquent, or even true.

Following sections will suggest ways of streamlining this ty

for publication. One Cornell senior realized this fundamental di erence when he rst co-authored a journal article in biology with one of his professors—a manuscript that was, as he said, "examined, criticized, corrected, submitted, returned, resubmitted, returned, etc., and nally accepted." In comparison with nishing papers for his courses, completing this process seemed "all

e Student Writer

For the student, the frame of reference for writing consists of knowledge he or she recently acquired from readings, lectures, and other course material or from references gathered for completing the paper. Because undergraduates usually try to use most of their knowledge and assembled references in a research paper, the frame of reference and the scope of the paper are nearly contiguous. Although there is a question mark representing a research question at the center of the diagram, teachers often complain that student writers don't really have a research question, position of their own, or reason for writing. e paper will simply have a "topic."

 e lack of a broader frame of reference largely accounts for these problems along with di culties establishing an authorial voice, distinguishing the author's ideas and knowledge from those of other writers, or making references to sources.

For the same reasons, student writers have di culty introducing their work to the reader. When the scope of a paper and its frame of reference are nearly the same, there are no broader perspectives from which a writer can take a position, construct an argument, identify a research question, or explain its signi cance in a eld of inquiry. In contrast, the perspectives necessary for academic writing develop in the distance between the scope of the writing and its broader frame of reference. e novice student writer must patch together a new frame of reference ad hoc for each paper, using scraps of disciplinary knowledge, "common sense," and all-purpose templates for school writing. For the student, the main challenge of writing is to assemble almost everything he or she knows about the topic into a single, coherent document, used to demonstrate knowledge recently acquired to an audience that typically knows more.

e Experienced Scholar

Established scholars begin research and writing projects with very large and highly organized frames of reference they have assembled through years of reading, research, teaching, and other professional activity. ey often have two or more related research projects underway, each of which will yield publications that answer di erent (though usually related) research questions. Principal Investigators of large research groups may have several related, co-authored research article[s] in Jove Ott usage of ap production [5c.] The

In a sharply focused, cohesive study, the writer poses a clearly articulated question about speci c phenomena (or other primary sources, such as primary texts) through the use of methods, theories, and concepts that de ne the signi cance of that question within a discipline. Each of these dimensions depends on clearly developed connections with the other two. For this reason, writers who feel lost or blocked in their projects usually have not brought one or more of these dimensions into balance with the others. For example:

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absorbed in the discipline, reading about
other research and theory without
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and data analysis.

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and analysis with too many research
questions or too little consideration of
the way this research ts into their
disciplines.

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versions of research questions that need
to be narrowed and refocused to
correspond with the actual results of
their research.

 ese three dimensions of a dissertation
often become unbalanced in the process of
research and writing, requiring deliberate
adjustment and negotiation with advisors.
Rather than addressing this imbalance by
expanding and complicating your project, you
should consider narrowing and simplifying
your approach, along with other strategies.

Example:

A doctoral candidate in the social sciences was
drafting chapters of a dissertation that answered
a focused research question about a case study
when his advisors observed that the theoretical
dimension of his work was somewhat thin.
After spending a few weeks reading theory and
related cases, he realized that he could expand
the implications of this case to broader research
questions and comparative arguments. In
relation to these expanded arguments, however,
his empirical data was now thin, and to validate

these arguments within a broader frame of reference he would need to complete additional eld studies. Further research and writing would delay completion of his dissertation by several months.

 e alternative strategy he chose was also closer to his advisors' intentions. Retaining his original research question and case study design, he added broader theoretical and comparative dimensions to the introduction and conclusion of this study, expanding its potential relevance to related research questions without complicating its basic structure. He could then pursue some of this additional research and writing after he received his PhD.

An undergraduate approach to writing may tell you that your .021 -1.13 Td (y) Tj |

Now that you are authorized to write a dissertation, with a focused research question, what form should your dissertation take?

Although dissertations take a great variety of forms, we can make some generalizations about their conceptual structures and the ways they typically develop. We can start by defining "good writing" as a linear sequence of words and sentences that

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   direction, and
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   destination.

In other words, readers should know clearly where they are starting, the direction in which the writing is taking them, and where they end up. All writing is a form of narrative: a story that moves us purposefully from one kind of understanding to another.

Research-based writing is a story about a particular kind of inquiry, intended to answer particular questions. e earliest research articles were literally narratives (often in the form of "letters") about the author's investigations. Like other good stories, these narratives of research are not just linear strings of words and information. ey also have shapes and structures, deriving from levels of generality and connected sequences of sections with di erent functions that answer di erent questions about the research in a logical order. e most common narrative sequence for research reports answers these questions:

R # 5 5" 5 5 1 . - # , . - 5 (5 5, 5 3 # (! 5 .) / (, - .
   why? (Introduction)
R 3 5 5 .)) 5 5 B   . " 5   - C
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scholars use for analysis, interpretation, and argument. "Results" may constitute the entire body of the dissertation, presented in several chapters.

We can diagram (in Figure 3) the way this structure distills a logical order and signi cance from a broader frame of reference in a discipline, giving particular attention to the introduction. is is the structure that the linear narrative of your research runs through. It is a story about the process of answering a speci c research question, posed within a broader frame of reference that de nes its signi cance, and leading (in the discussion/ conclusion) to further, unanswered research questions with expanding implications.

Note that the vectors at both ends of this diagram extend to in nity. At ascending and descending levels of generality, all lines of inquiry about phenomena in all elds ultimately intersect in increasingly labyrinthine (and confusing) networks of potential relevance. A speci c research question about historical events in a certain period, for example, is potentially related not only to other research on that period and place in the eld of history, but also to research in politics, cultural studies, literature, the sciences, and other elds concerning other periods and places. To write a story about your research within this structure, you do not need to make sense of all the broader connections, implications, research literatures, and alternative lines of inquiry above and beneath it. In fact, you cannot hope to do so, because ultimately they do not make sense in a way you (or anyone else) could expl] TJ -5

FIGURE 3: THE ESSENTIAL FORM OF RESEARCH BASED WRITING

material before you have decided what you intend to build with it, in the hope that the material itself will tell you what to do. When writing seems impossible, you may conclude that you don't yet have enough material to make such decisions and will gather more, through further reading and other research.

As a consequence, doctoral candidates ma

in the social sciences and sciences. When a writer has not yet identi ed a central research question, all connections, cases, and implications of the research seem equally relevant. Without a center that determines priorities and sequences, the dissertation becomes a loosely assembled constellation of issues, ndings, or lines of inquiry.

A PhD candidate's own career concerns sometimes motivate this tendency to broaden and complicate a dissertation project. If your dissertation will be the main representation of your interests and potential as a scholar, you may feel that it should include as many dimensions of your work as possible: all the related directions your research and teaching will eventually take. Candidates sometimes express concerns that they will be "pigeonholed" by a narrowly focused dissertation: perceived to be interested only in that kind of research question, subject, or method of analysis. e desire to make the dissertation represent all of your potential research interests can undermine the main credential for your career development: a completed dissertation and PhD.

e Roles of
Advisors in Focusing Dissertations

Dissertation projects also can become unmanageable because of roles, relationships, and communications among advisors.

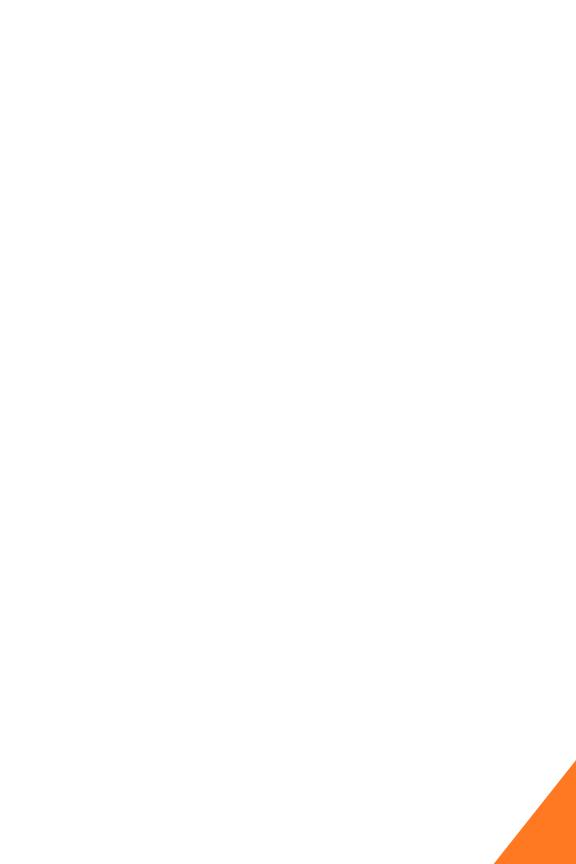In principle, the chairs of e4isseruvec ep pr

Time factors probably represent the most dramatic differences between student writing and dissertation writing (and its professional counterparts). Senior thesis projects may have given you exposure to some of the challenges of orchestrating research and writing on a complex project over many months. Research grant proposals and professional articles also can introduce graduate students to "incremental writing"—work that reaches completion through numerous stages over long periods. But the time bracketed for completing a dissertation—between the A and B Exams—is usually the longest period that doctoral candidates have spent working on any single project. While that great expanse of two years or more is a potentially luxurious opportunity, it also requires new forms of deliberate, strategic thinking about time management.

Although your lives, research projects, and responsibilities will differ over this period, the great majority of you will have sufficient time to complete dissertations. Many of you have children, teaching assistantships, and other important commitments that will limit and fragment your time to work on your dissertations. Complications in your research or data analysis also may consume more time than you expect. Such commitments and potential distractions pose much greater challenges, however, for scholars in faculty positions who prepare courses and teach, advise students, and serve on committees, along with conducting research. Yet most of these faculty members find time to complete articles, conference papers, books, and other writing projects. In fact, they must do so to maintain their careers.

How will you organize and use the time available? How will you complete your dissertation in the midst of all the other things that you must do, or might choose to do, in the same period?

Create and Preserve Blocks of Time for Writing

Productive scholars set aside regular blocks of time for work on their writing projects.

These blocks of time do not need to be

longer than two or three hours, though they may be. But they should be free of interruption and su ciently frequent to maintain attention to work in progress. Other

activity. Although doctoral candidates in the sciences are most likely to identify focused research questions early in their dissertation work, they also are inclined to underestimate the amounts of interpretation, revision, and time involved in writing a dissertation. On the other hand, in elds that view writing as the construction of knowledge, in texts and in the study of texts, candidates may delay writing because they do not yet feel prepared to do authorized interpretation.

In both cases, this delay seems necessary because dissertation research and writing are so di erent from the comparatively simple tasks that undergraduates complete. But the resulting loss of freedom and control in the writing process actually perpetuates undergraduate approaches to writing. Due to time constraints and the small scale of their projects, undergraduates try to avoid second thoughts and revisions, treating the writing process as a condensed sequence of separate stages (e.g., plan, write, proofread, turn in) and thus lose the opportunities to rethink and improve their work. e resulting experience of immediate performance can make the "writing" stage unnecessarily daunting. As a Cornell sophomore said, " us, I feel my writing should be coherent, intelligently composed, and interesting in order to re ect some of my nonexistent characteristics."

 rough second thoughts and revisions, however, candidates c my vc* (w) Tjatis-10(v)] TJ [vioh my di er1(sim.067 Tw 0.00fusJ [-10(r)] TJ [-10(iag)6 TJ.386 -1.2)] E6(e)] TJ [1(r)]opporiting bec

about the nature of revision itself, from authoritative references to the theorists she most admired:

Successive drafts of my own talk did not lead to a clearer vision because it simply was not my vision. I, like so many of my students was reproducing acceptable truths, imitating the gestures and rituals of the academy, not

K D Y L Q J   F R Q ¿ G H Q F H   H Q R nor trusting the native language I had learned. I had surrendered my own authority to someone else, to those other authorial voices.

Writers can establish and lose their own voices and authority in their work at any stage, as writing tasks and rhetorical factors change. Students most likely to pursue doctoral studies often discover a real authorial voice (not just an imitation of one) in undergraduate papers. is experience changes the entire nature and purpose of writing in ways that often lead to advanced studies. In her essay "Writing Political Science: Asking a Question en (Actually) Answering It," Cornell Government professor Mary Katzenstein recalls, "with still palpable pleasure, the rst essay I ever wrote as an undergraduate that felt like it was truly my own. It was not, in fact, until my junior year."

What was she doing before that moment as a good student, while producing essays that were not truly her own? "By freshman year of college," Katzenstein observes, "students are skilled replicators of authorized interpretations." While in the past this replication occurred through searches in card catalogues and encyclopedias, "now it is the urgent combing of the Web with its addictive, ever-enticing sense that with just a little more time, one more set of searches, the crucial clue to an often unspeci ed problem will be unearthed; in both cases the search is driven by the uneasy quest for assurance that someone who 'knows' can tell you what is worth saying."

Dissertation writers often become absorbed in similar quests for "what is worth saying" in the view of someone else who knows." e larger frame of reference and higher level of authority that a dissertation seems to require can undermine con dence and divert writers from clarifying and communicating what they know: their own xonlfibuliQns Rl kRowDdlg GnHtDeV Although your advisors and other scholars may possess more general knowledge of your eld, a dissertation should address these readers as colleagues and peers in a community of scholars who are interested in \ R X U   F R Q W U L E X W L R Q V   W R as teachers and higher authorities. is shift of the writer's persona in relation to the audience is a central feature of the transition from student to scholar.

Loss of voice, focus, and con dence most often occurs when writers are doing background reading or working on introductions or literature review chapters: trying to understand and explain what other scholars have said. is work is necessary, because the "story" of your research is also a story about its signi cance within your eld, in relation to the work of others. If you feel that you are losing focus on your own work, however, this literature review is probably leading you in the wrong direction. is why we encouraged you, in Section 5, to think of a 5, to

e point of release in the writing process refers to communication with the intended audience, such as the advisors who will evaluate a dissertation or the journal in which you hope to publish a manuscript. In dissertation writing, as in publication, further revision usually follows this initial release to the intended audience, but at that point you have nonetheless exposed your work to their evaluations.

is observation places dissertation advisors in an ambiguous position. As the intended audiences for a dissertation you will defend in your B Exams, they are ultimate judges of its strengths and weaknesses. As advisors and mentors for the process of research and writing, they also function as coaches who should help you produce work that meets their expectations.

Graduate advisors and committees occupy these dual roles in a bewildering variety of ways, with di ering implications for the candidates they advise. To help you negotiate these complex relations, the Cornell Graduate School is publishing a separate guide for graduate students: Being Mentored in Graduate School: A Guide for Cornell Students. Here we will add a few observations that apply speci cally to writing.

Most graduate students can identify at least one committee member who can function as an e ective "coach" throughout their research and writing. ese advisors can serve as supportive readers of early plans and drafts of your dissertations, suspending judgments that would make exposing work in progress potentially hazardous. Even if you have this support, however, we encourage you to nd other readers for your work among peers and friends, scholars in your eld at other institutions, or Cornell faculty members who are not on your committees. Due to their own time commitments, even the most supportive advisors may provide limited or delayed feedback on drafts and plans, and their immediate suggestions may not provide the guidance you need to move ahead. Writers who ask for advice from advisors often feel obliged to follow that advice, even if it seems misguided. In any case more feedback from di erent perspectives is usually better than less.

Incremental readers, whether faculty members or peers, assist in the process of writing; they do not view themselves as judges of the product. For this reason, dissertation writers often bene t from writing and reading groups among peers, in or across departments, who meet regularly and exchange work in progress. Some departments facilitTJ [-20(l)]

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will assume that anything you show them represents your best e ort, leading them to premature conclusions about the quality of your work. As a rule, you should edit your writing before submitting it to advisors, even if you know that this version needs further guidance and revision.

Edit by Ear

When we edit or proofread drafts of our work, we typically look for errors, ambiguities, or awkward phrasing. When we notice problems, however, we usually hear them rst, or hear and see them at once. We recognize incongruities between the inner vocalization of the language that Eudora Welty (in One Writer's Beginnings) called her "reader voice" and the writing we see. is is why we usually say that a sentence "sounds wrong," not that it "looks wrong." We notice problems, and sometimes correct them, with an auditory sense for the way the wr

School at large, with approval from the esis Advisor. We strongly recommend that you read these requirements for submission before you produce the nal manuscript you intend to le. You can nd this information in the esis Advisor section of the Graduate School web site, at www.gradschool.cornell. edu/?p=13. is page includes links to the detailed PDF "Doctoral Dissertation and Master's esis Guide: Formatting, Production, and Submission Requirements," along with schedules for seminars, contact information for consulting with the esis Advisor, and other assistance.

Although required formats for gures, illustrations, and many other features of the dissertation are quite speci c, the Graduate School does not require a particular system of documentation and reference for dissertations. Instead, you should consistently use the system your department requires or the one used most commonly in your eld. e three most common documentation systems are those of the American Psychological Association (APA), the Modern Language Association (MLA), and the Chicago Manual of Style. Each of these systems o ers a published guide as well as electronic services on their web sites. Other professional organizations (such as the American Chemical Society) publish their own style manuals, and your advisors may prefer that you use one of those. Because each of these systems is extremely detailed and varies substantially from others, you should acquire a complete version and follow it closely.

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Advice for Non-Native Speakers of English

I f you use English as a foreign or second language, you may feel that you are at a disadvantage compared with dissertation writers who are native speakers of English. The extent to which diﬃculties actually result from a writer's background in a language other than English is not easy to determine and depends in part on one's level of ﬂuency in written English.

If all native speakers of English produced polished, eﬀective scholarly writing with ease, you could assume that problems you encounter result from your weaker grasp of English. We've observed, however, that dissertation writing is normally diﬃcult and unfamiliar to the great majority of doctoral candidates. Specialized forms of scholarly discourse—with their complex terminologies, frames of reference, uses of evidence, forms of reasoning, and standards for validity—do not represent anyone's native dialect. Individual writers therefore struggle in a great variety of ways for many reasons. Measuring relative advantage or disadvantage is usually impossible or misleading, because there are so many factors involved. You may mistakenly feel disadvantaged by diﬃculties you share with other doctoral candidates, including native speakers of English, and this misconception can become a real disadvantage in itself.

It will be more accurate and useful for you to think of Cornell as an international community representing an extraordinary variety of linguistic and cultural backgrounds. In this community, international scholars include faculty as well as students. Although the primary medium of writing and instruction in this community is academic English, all of us have strengths and weaknesses in using this language eﬀectively. Although you need to assess and increase your level of ﬂuency in English, many other factors will contribute to your performance, including the quality and signiﬁcance of your research, your grasp of research literature in your ﬁeld, and the organizational skills and methods you use to develop your dissertation. All of the advice in previous sections therefore applies equally to native and non-native speakers of English. Much of this advice can help you compensate for

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difficulties in using English as a second or foreign language. Writing a dissertation or research article is not a "test" of your fluency in English. Professional academic writing is a process through which initial plans and drafts gradually become professional communications and works of scholarship, through extensive revision and advice from readers. In this process, your goal is not to avoid all errors, ambiguities, or organizational problems in first drafts but to make these problems irrelevant to the finished work. And for this purpose, scholars typically rely on help from others.

edu/?p=13. Although the tutors in the Walk-In Service, described in the previous section, are not professional ESL instructors, they can help you to identify and correct common patterns of error.

Help with Editing

The specific kinds of help you may need as a non-native speaker of English will depend on your level of fluency and language background. Native speakers of East Asian languages, for example, typically have lingering difficulties with the use of articles (especially *the*), preposition usage, and diverse expressions of number in nouns, verb forms, and subject/verb agreement. Most non-native speakers of English, even at high levels of fluency, continue to make stylistic errors in the use of idioms: particular usage of words and phrases by native speakers. If these errors occur within sentences that are otherwise correct and express what the writer wants to say, however, they represent minor problems of editing. If your advisors are concerned about such errors in drafts, you should make these editorial changes before you show them work in progress, including the draft you submit for your B Exam, and you should be sure that your finished dissertation is carefully edited before you present it to the Graduate School. Advisors or friends may be able to help you with this kind of revision; but if they cannot, you may want to hire a professional editor. You can find a list of professional editors on the web page for the Thesis Advisor: www.gradschool.cornell.

Dissertations can be di cult to complete for the same reasons that academic books and research articles are di cult to complete. ese are complex, long-term projects that must meet standards for scholarship in their elds. ey require considerable knowledge of the subject, persuasive evidence of validity and signi cance, and extensive revision. is is not the kind of writing that anyone can expect to churn out in a single draft. A dissertation therefore functions both as evidence of and as training for your potential as a productive, professional scholar.

Dissertations should be somewhat easier to complete than comparable publications because they do not have to pass the rigorous scrutiny of peer reviewers and editors in the later stages of the publication process. e factors that add to the di culty of dissertation writing for many PhD candidates result from the unfamiliarity of completing writing projects of this length, complexity, and duration. In this transition between student writing and professional writing, doctoral candidates tend to underestimate the rhetorical changes that rede ne writing, requiring motivations and strategies similar to the ones that productive scholars have developed. Although the dissertation is a transitional text—no longer student writing but not yet (in most cases) a publication— S U R I H V V L R Q D O   Z U L W L Q J   L Q writing, is the reference point for dissertation work.

Because this rhetorical transition toward professional writing is poorly marked, dissertation writers often continue to use writing strategies that worked for them as undergraduates but will not continue to work for professional writing projects. is guide has therefore emphasized the necessary changes in motivations and purposes, forms and reference frames, methods, time management strategies, and other dimensions of this transition.

While underestimating these changes, doctoral candidates often overestimate the necessary breadth and complexity of the dissertation. If your dissertation will be ten times the length of an undergraduate research paper, with comparably higher

management skills are more valuable than "natural" writing ability (whatever that may mean).

Serious struggles and delays in completing dissertations usually result from weaknesses in one or more of these essential components of the process, not from lack of ability. Struggling writers may be trying to produce a dissertation that remains unfocused, unstr

way o , we encourage you to look forward to it as a productive meeting with your advisors about the further development of your work. Your advisors may suggest nal revisions of your dissertation before you le it, with their approval, but they should also guide you in developing research articles or a book manuscript from your dissertation, along with giving further directions for research. In the B Exam, you should be receptive to suggestions, feel free to ask questions as well as to answer them, and take notes.

After passing their B Exams and ling their dissertations, newly minted PhDs often experience a certain malaise or quandary about further development of their work. As a dissertation, the dissertation is nished. Now what?

Although a dissertation should resemble publications in its eld, it represents a complete working draft or platform for publications. Unless constituent articles have been published, the nal and typically arduous stages of the publication process remain incomplete. In this respect, your development as a professional writer and scholar remains incomplete as well. If you intend to pursue a career in research and scholarship, you will need to refocus your time and attention around these a ce In this respect,Af yto the osents a -15(y)] T0.002 -1.203 os5(ns1 Tf (qu)

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