

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Title of Issue (short descriptive title by which the issue may be referenced)</b>  | Proposal for the Revision of PhD Dissertation Copy Editor Submission Due Dates |
| <b>Description of Issue</b>   |  |
| <p>I. Executive Summary and Problem Statement</p> <p>This submission addresses the critical need to revise the single, fixed-date policy for PhD dissertation submission to the copy editor. The current system is a vestigial practice that fails to reflect the reality of Old Dominion University as a growing, high-output R1 research institution. This single due date, implemented each semester, creates an unmanageable administrative backlog, resulting in undue stress on students and faculty, and—most importantly—impedes the timely dissemination of cutting-edge research.</p> <p>Furthermore, the implementation of the new Forward Focused Digital Transformation Initiative (FFTDI) and its revised, progressive curriculum delivery schedule renders the current single-date policy an outdated relic. The FFTDI will inherently lead to varied completion timelines for students, demanding a flexible and dynamic due date system.</p>   |  |
| <b>Rationale for Submission</b>   |  |
| <p>II. Strategic Advantages of a Defense-Keyed Submission Due Date</p> <p>The proposed policy shift from a fixed, single due date to a flexible, defense-keyed due date offers critical operational and strategic advantages, benefiting students, faculty, and the University's research stature. Specifically, this modernization will enhance academic rigor and accelerate research dissemination (A), significantly improve the experience for students and faculty (B), and ensure full compliance with major strategic initiatives like the FFTDI and the EVMS merger (C).</p> <p>A. Enhancing Academic Rigor and Accelerating Research Dissemination</p> <p>Tying the final submission due date directly to the successful defense date aligns ODU with the best practices of its R1 peer institutions, where a short post-defense window is standard. This policy change achieves at least three immediate critical objectives:</p> <p>Ensured Rigor: The short, defense-keyed due date inherently mandates that the dissertation possesses sufficient rigor to allow for all final revisions to be completed within a short period (e.g., 10-15 days). This maintains the highest level of scholarly quality commensurate with an R1 doctorate.</p> <p>Rapid Dissemination: It eliminates administrative lag, allowing students to disseminate their cutting-edge research in a timely fashion. This rapid turnaround is crucial for fields concerned with critical innovations and intellectual property (IP) protection, ensuring ODU research remains competitive and current.</p> <p>Operational Efficiency: It streamlines the administrative review process by distributing the copy editor's workload consistently throughout the calendar year, rather than concentrating it into an overwhelming, quality-straining surge.</p> <p>B. Direct Benefits to Students and Faculty Experience</p> <p>The fixed, single due date currently creates an unnecessary bottleneck and a period of intense, undue stress for all parties. Adopting a defense-keyed due date provides tangible benefits to ODU's primary stakeholders:</p> <p>Reduced Student Stress: Students can focus on their defense and committee-required revisions without the added pressure of a looming, arbitrary institutional due date that may fall immediately following the defense. The timeline becomes predictable and directly tied to their own scholarly completion milestone.</p> <p>Reduced Faculty Workload: By distributing the final review process throughout the year, the intense pressure on faculty to complete final sign-offs and reviews during traditional peak semester closing periods is significantly mitigated.</p> <p>Improved Student-Centricity: This modern, flexible approach supports the diverse needs and varied timelines of ODU's professional and global graduate student body, fostering a more supportive administrative environment befitting an R1 institution.</p> <p>C. Furthering ODU's Progress: Alignment with FFTDI, EVMS, and R1 Goals</p> <p>Modernizing the submission policy is essential for ODU to fully realize its strategic growth initiatives and cement its status:</p> <p>FFTDI Compliance: The single due date is fundamentally incompatible with the Forward Focused Digital Transformation Initiative (FFTDI), which is designed to create a flexible curriculum delivery model allowing students to complete their studies at different times throughout the year. The defense-keyed policy is required to fully support the FFTDI's progressive academic calendar.</p> <p>EVMS Integration: The ongoing merger with EVMS introduces a new suite of health and scientific graduate programs often operating on varied and accelerated timelines. Integrating these diverse programs and their non-traditional</p> |  |

schedules into a unified institution demands a nimble, year-round administrative process that the current fixed due date cannot support.

Cementing R1 Status: By adopting a best-practice policy used by high-output research universities, ODU strengthens its administrative infrastructure to match the volume and quality of its research output, thereby confirming its identity and capabilities as a modern R1 institution.

III. Proposed Solution and Implementation Strategy

It is proposed that the due date for the final submission of the PhD dissertation to the copy editor be keyed on the date of the successful defense, as is common practice across peer R1 institutions. It is reflective of the FFTDI, the size of the university, the volume of dissertations expected of an R1 institution, and the rigor of the doctorate commensurate with an R1 institution’s reputation.

A. Specific Policy Revision Recommendation

The single, historical, vestigial due date should be replaced with a policy that dictates the final copy editor submission must occur within business days following the final successful defense (where is a period to be determined by the Committee C, likely 10 to 15 business days, but certainly no more than that).

B. Strategic Relocation and Restructuring of the Copy Editor Function

To effectively manage a flexible, year-round submission model, a structural revision of the administrative support is necessary. It is strongly recommended that the copy editor function be reviewed for:

Relocation to ODU Global: Given ODU Global’s year-round operational schedule and expertise in managing varied instructional timelines, this unit may be better positioned to manage the consistent, non-semester-based flow of dissertation submissions.

Staffing and Capacity Review: A full-time administrative position dedicated to coordinating this function, independent of the semester calendar, should be considered to handle the R1 volume and ensure rapid turnaround.

IV. Conclusion

The current fixed due date is an administrative constraint that compromises the student experience, strains faculty resources, and limits the pace of research dissemination at a major R1 university. By aligning the due date to the student's defense and strategically relocating administrative support, ODU can create a modern, efficient, and student-centric process that supports the goals of the FFTDI and strengthens our reputation as a cutting-edge research institution.

|            |                  |
|------------|------------------|
| Name       | Marc Ouellette   |
| Department | English          |
| Email      | mouellet@odu.edu |
| Date       | Oct 10, 2025     |