

Protecting the anonymity of the study site
Guidance for OCL dissertations

1. Assume that the organization wants its identity protected.
2. Use a pseudonym. Use it the first time the name of the organization would logically be used and identify that you are using a pseudonym. For instance, “Mason Dixon Line University (pseudonym) is a...” Then use it throughout the document. Be judicious in the creation of the made-up name. For example, if you are creating a pseudonym for USC, don’t call it “Southern Cal University.” Additionally, avoid pseudonyms that might distract the reader and try not to use abbreviations or acronyms that are identical with anything commonly known or used.
3. Check the details you provide about the organization for identifiable information. Remove those that make it easy to identify the site. For example, if one were using USC and wanted to protect its identity, then you would not describe it as a large, private research university located in Los Angeles. There is only one that fits that description. Instead you might say “a large private research university in the western United States.”
4. Once a pseudonym is used, the organization described in your dissertation essentially becomes fictitious. From there, you should provide information that generally resembles the true organization. The information that relates directly to the problem of practice and organizational goal is most pertinent. Direct quotes, exact figures, and citations to websites should not be necessary. Instead, provide approximations.