A General Guide for Writing Project/Thesis

Special Note: This document is for instructional purposes only; faculty directing project/thesis may have different and/or additional requirements and guidelines. Students should consult with their project/thesis advisor for any specific requirements.

*A thesis is a substantial generalization that can stand by itself as the basis of an essay's development. It is an assertion of what the writer believes is right or wrong and why, and it is a statement that can be either true or false.*

Students must be eligible to and then register for **SWRK500 Culminating Experience** as part of completing the Project/Thesis.

**SWRK500 Culminating Experience** Advancement to candidacy is required prior to registration. Credit given upon successful completion of either, A. Thesis (an original contribution to knowledge) OR B. Research Project (addition to technical/professional knowledge or application of knowledge through case study, field study, documentary report, substantial annotated bibliography, or article of publishable quality) OR C. Directed Study and Comprehensive Examination (seminar, portfolio, examination). **Prerequisite:** SWRK 210. Graded Credit/No Credit. 2-4 units.

Students should consider many factors in approaching a member of the Division's faculty to act as advisor on a Project/Thesis. Chief among these factors is the faculty member's interest and expertise on the topic of the Project/Thesis itself. Given the amount of time and energy the student is required to commit in completing a Project/Thesis they will want the assistance and guidance of someone of like interest and commitment. Occasionally, students may choose to develop a Project/Thesis topic that is a smaller part of a research project being conducted by the member of the faculty but this is not a requirement. In either case, students should consider trying to match their personal working style with that of the potential advisor's when considering who to approach as a Project/Thesis advisor. Please keep in mind that teaching and other institutional responsibilities for each member of the Division's faculty also impacts their availability to serve as Project/Thesis advisors.

**Chapter 1: Problem Statement and Overview**

**Introduction**

The general introduction to the topic should discuss how you became interested in doing this research, study, or project. In this section you can write about your opinion or history as to why and or how you became interested in the topic or issue. This serves as a general introduction on the topic and eventually narrows to the specific topic area; discusses general concepts, gives a
reference or two if necessary, but the bulk/detail of related work is discussed later, and concludes with a clear statement on what the work is about.

Suggested Length: One and a half to three (1.5 to 3) pages.

**Background of the Problem**

This is where the student is essentially answering the questions: who, what, where, when. You are establishing the basis for your project. You give specific information here. For example, if you are writing about programs for women leaving county jails, you would give the statistics on how many women are actually in jail, how many programs exist, etc. This section is very important because it establishes what you will be doing in chapter two, the review of the literature. You are defining the parameters of your project, what is and what is not important and relevant to your project. In this section you will be citing sources of information.

Suggested Length: four to six (4 to 6) pages.

**Statement of the Problem**

The statement of the problem is a clear and precise statement of what focus of the study is.

Sample: There is a lack of well defined intervention services and treatment modalities for children diagnosed with Attachment Disorder.

Sample: There is a need for empowering parents and teachers of children with Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD) through the development of access to user-friendly to resources and support in understanding, intervening and living with ADHD.

Suggested Length: Typically one or two (1 to 2) sentences in length.

**Purpose of the Study**

Here the student is briefly stating the importance of the project/thesis. General points or questions to guide you on what to include in an the purpose of the study are: Why is the study or project needed? What practical problem does it address? Who will benefit from such the proposed study or project?

Sample: The purpose of this project is to produce a resource handbook for women leaving jail. This handbook will be distributed …

Sample: The purpose of the study is to document and analyze the use of anatomical dolls in assessing possible sexual abuse among three and four year-old children.

Suggested Length: One to two (1 to 2) paragraphs.
Theoretical Framework

Here the student presents the theoretical foundation of that will be used as support in the analysis and understanding the topic of study. The theory(s) or perspective selected will of course be dependent on the focus and nature of the project.

Sample: General systems theory, feminist perspective or the ecological perspective might be examples of what functions as the theoretical foundation of your study. The student, in consultation with their advisor will need to consider which theory(s) are most applicable and relevant for the topic. This section is usually not a detailed explanation of the theory itself but rather how the theory or perspective acts as foundation to the study.

Suggested Length: One to two (1 to 2) pages.

Definition of Terms

This is where you provide definitions for frequently used technical terms. For example: in the project on women and jail, the terms recidivism, probation, work furlough, etc. would be defined. For the project on anatomical dolls, terms such as child abuse, molest, anatomical dolls would be defined.

Suggested Length: Dependent on the number of terms to be defined.

Assumptions

This section asks the reader to accept specified assumptions as valid. No citations or proofs need to be provided. For example, if you were writing a project on some aspect of housing, you might write an assumption about the lack of adequate and affordable housing in the US today. This way you would assume that fact as true and not have to provide evidence to support it.

Suggested Length: Dependent on the number of assumptions made.

Justification

General points or questions to guide you on what to include here are: Why is the study or project needed? What practical problem does it address? Who will benefit from such the proposed study or project?

Suggested Length: One or two (1 or 2) paragraphs.

Limitations

Write a paragraph about what you will not be doing. For example, if you are doing a project on women and jails, you might be interviewing women in jail but not women who have been...
released from jail. For the project on anatomical dolls, children and parents were not
interviewed, nor were judges or lawyers.

Suggested Length: One or two (1 or 2) paragraphs.

**Chapter 2: Review of the Literature**

This is probably the most difficult chapter to write. It involves concentrated research. Here you
are reviewing the essential literature on your topic. You will be identifying what has been written
about your topic. That is, researching other people's work, specifically pointing out how what
you do is different/better than what they did. This should be focused around your topic, not just
general items somewhere in the vicinity of your general area. This section requires very close
consultation with your project/thesis advisor.

You will be spending a great deal of time in the library, finding the relevant information. This
can be very time consuming if you just start looking. You need to carefully identify the areas that
need to be reviewed. You should have already done that in your Background of the Problem.
You will have multiple citations from a number of different journals. You will also be citing
books, but the most contemporary literature is in journals. In this section you will rarely be citing
just one author, unless you are giving a direct quote. The purpose of this section is to tell the
reader what is already known about the topic. If your topic is not well researched, you will look
at related areas. One might approach this section as if writing mini-papers on each area then an
integrative summary.

Sample: A project on women and jails might include a review of the literature in the following
areas: women and crime-general, women and punishment-general, women in jails, programs for
women released from jails.

Sample: A project on anatomical dolls, literature on the following areas might be reviewed:
instrument credibility, interviewing credibility, developmental issues of the child subject.

Suggested Length: Twenty pages (20) pages.

**Chapter 3: Methods**

This is where you describe how you are doing your research. Here you will describe your
research design, the subjects and how you identified them, the research instrumentation being
used, data gathering procedures, and protection of human subjects.

For those of you who are doing manuals, you describe where and how you obtained your
information in order to write the manual.

Suggested Length: Two to four (2 to 4) pages.
Chapter 4: The Project

This is it!! Here you present the data that you have collected. If you are writing a manual, the manual is here. You are simply telling the reader about what you found in your research. You can use graphs, charts etc. to present the data.

Suggested Length: Dependent on the data that you have collected and form of project or thesis.

Chapter 5: Summary, Conclusions and Implications

In this chapter you will discuss your findings (from chapter 4) in terms of how these findings compare to, contrast with, or add to what was found in the literature review. You also get to write about what else needs to be done. What additional research should be conducted, how, for what purpose etc. General questions or points you could use to guide you in writing this section include: Revisits your objectives. Did you accomplish what you intended? Did you accomplish more than what you set out to accomplish originally? What were the major points learned? What are your contributions to the field? What foundation for future research have you established?

Suggested Length: Three to Five (3 to 5) pages.

Appendices and References

The last section is the Appendices and References. This section of the Project/Thesis could include materials such as program flyers, instruments, questionnaires or other research tools that were used or developed for use in the project. Please keep in mind that if copyrighted materials are used one should obtain letters of release from the copyright holder and include as part of appendix. Under the heading of References you should include a complete list of cited materials used in completing your project/thesis. You are to use the guidelines contained in the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (4th Edition) in writing references.

Online Resources for Project/Thesis Writing

CSUS, Division of Social Work Online Documents & Forms
http://www.hhs.csus.edu/SWRK/SWForms.htm

CSUS, Office of Graduate Studies Online Forms
http://www.csus.edu/gradstudies/forms.htm