Graduate Research Paper Guidelines

Format. The format should conform to the *Publications Manual of the American Psychological Association, Sixth Edition, (2009)* or later editions. This includes how to handle headings, references, page formatting, page set-up, the bibliography, and other topics. Rules for citations are particularly important. This is a great source for writing in general. A copy is available on the Department of Social Work web page.

**Turnitin.com** The Graduate Research Paper can only be turned in through [www.turnitin.com](http://www.turnitin.com). Please see the link on the Department of Social Work web page.

Due Date. The Graduate Research Paper is to be turned into the Director of the MSW program no later than Friday of the 8th week of the spring semester for students planning to graduate in the spring or summer.

**Institutional Review Board**

If your research project will involve collecting data from individuals or reviewing information about them (as in options 1 and 2 of the Empirical Research Study below), you will be required to submit an application for review of the project to the UNI Institutional Review Board (IRB). This is required before discussing the project with potential participants or otherwise beginning any study activities beyond the literature review. Also, before you apply for IRB review, the IRB requires that you obtain training in human subjects research protections. Information on how to do this, along with detailed instructions and forms, is available on the IRB website at [http://www.uni.edu/osp/protection-human-research-participants](http://www.uni.edu/osp/protection-human-research-participants). If you’re not sure if your project needs IRB review, you can email anita.gordon@uni.edu. Please allow 3-4 weeks for the IRB process.

**Types of Graduate Research Paper.** There are two different types of Graduate Research Paper; each is acceptable. First there is the meta-analytic research review. Second, there is an empirical research study based on a smaller literature review. You can do either type of paper, both of which are described below.

For both types of Graduate Research Papers, the literature review will not be annotated (study by study) but will integrate and synthesize the literature. Also, students will use legitimate peer-reviewed, scholarly sources. Please see links below for a checklist of acceptable sources.

The Graduate Research Paper will integrate the Field Practicum and Research. Students will include examples of how he/she applied the meta-analytic review or empirical study to inform and change their practice, and how he/she applied their practice to inform and change the meta-analytic review or empirical study.

**Core Competencies**

The three core competencies to be addressed include critical thinking (2.1.3), diversity in practice (2.1.4), and research/practice (2.1.6). The indicators listed for each competency will
serve as indicators for measuring successful completion of the paper. As the criteria include a paper suitable for publication, the categories will be: 1) accept, 2) revise and resubmit, and 3) reject.

These core competencies and indicators are:

Educational Policy 2.1.3 – Apply critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgments.

- Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of empirical/theoretical perspectives.

Educational Policy 2.1.4 – Engage in diversity and difference in practice.

- Research and apply knowledge of diverse populations to enhance client well-being.

Educational Policy 2.1.6 – Engage in research-informed practice and practice-informed research.

- Use research methodology to evaluate clinical practice effectiveness and/or outcomes.

**Meta-Analytic Literature Review.** The outline as follows: 1) Title page, 2) Abstract, 3) Introduction, 4) Literature Review, 5) Discussion, 6) Conclusions, and 7) References. Meta-analytic reviews will: 1) be exhaustive reviews of the literature for the past 3-5 years (depending on the topic) and include “classic studies”, 2) include at least 25 sources, 3) criticize research methodology where needed, 4) explain differences in findings, for example why some articles are different from the preponderance of the evidence, and how that affected their conclusions, and 5) state how their research informed and changed their practice, and how their practice informed and changed their research.

**Empirical Research Study.** Graduate Research Papers can relate a literature review to a study based on their field practice. The study can consist of: 1) evaluating their practice, 2) interviewing staff or administration to learn about the agency, the field of practice, etc. or 3) reflection on the field. The reflection on the field will consist of: analysis of key aspects of your field practicum and the steps of engagement, assessment, planning, implementation, evaluation, and/or termination within your analysis. How does each step relate to your field experience? Which aspects are most relevant?

In this case, the literature review will be less extensive, more focused, and directly related to the study (as in a data-oriented article). The outline will consist of: 1) Title page, 2) Abstract, 3) Introduction, 4) Literature Review, 5) Methodology, 6) Results, 7) Discussion, 8) Conclusions, 9) References. The literature review for this paper will include at least 10 sources, criticize research methodology where needed, and lead to conclusions to be tested by the data collection. In the conclusion section for this paper, students will state how their research informed and changed their practice, and how their practice informed and changed their literature review.

Please note that if you select option one (evaluate practice) or two (interviewing staff or administration) for your Graduate Research Paper, your study will need to be approved by the
Institutional Review Board of the University of Northern Iowa. If you select option three (reflection on the field) your study will not need to be approved by the Institutional Review Board of the University of Northern Iowa.

**Tips for the Graduate Research Paper.** You may wish to read your paper aloud to someone else before submitting your final draft. Having someone read your paper aloud to you will help clear up problem sentences and identify ideas that are not fully or clearly developed.

Authors often “sleep on” their final draft and read it with fresh eyes the next day. This helps ensure clarity and allows the addition of thoughts you may have omitted.

**Useful Links**

Completed SW Graduate Research Papers
[https://scholarworks.uni.edu/swk_grp/](https://scholarworks.uni.edu/swk_grp/)

UNI’s Social Work Database

Rod Library Resources
[http://guides.lib.uni.edu/sw6218](http://guides.lib.uni.edu/sw6218)

UNI Graduate Student Research Guide
[http://guides.lib.uni.edu/grad](http://guides.lib.uni.edu/grad)

Evidence-Based Practice in Social Work
[http://guides.lib.uni.edu/evidencebasedSW](http://guides.lib.uni.edu/evidencebasedSW)

Citing Sources: APA Guide
[http://guides.lib.uni.edu/citing-sources/citing-sources-apa](http://guides.lib.uni.edu/citing-sources/citing-sources-apa)

Evaluating Sources
[http://guides.lib.uni.edu/evaluate-sources/](http://guides.lib.uni.edu/evaluate-sources/)

Writing Center at UNI
[http://www.uni.edu/unialc/writingcenter.html](http://www.uni.edu/unialc/writingcenter.html)

[http://www.criticalthinking.org](http://www.criticalthinking.org)

link to college of education at University of Kentucky that has resources on research
[http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/](http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/)