

Eastern Kentucky University

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SWK 340: Social Work Research Methods OER Collection

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SWK 340: Research Study Proposal Guidelines

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SWK 340 Final Research Study Proposal Paper & Presentation Slides Guidelines

Purpose: The research study proposal is an opportunity for students to investigate a topic of interest to them and apply the knowledge they have learned through the course by writing a research paper. Students will submit elements of the proposal throughout the semester and receive feedback from the instructor on each exercise. These elements will be compiled to write the final research proposal. Any suggested edits that were provided to the students in assignment feedback should be made and included in the final proposal.

Objectives:

1. To propose a research study relevant to social work practice that integrates all course content and concepts and that will demonstrate the student's mastery of the course.
2. To demonstrate mastery of a scientific and scholarly writing style consistent with the American Psychological Association Publication Manual (7th edition).
3. To demonstrate writing skills that evidence appropriate organization, development and presentation of ideas, and excellent grammar, syntax, and critical thinking skills.

Proposal Instructions: You will write a research proposal using the outline provided that must conform to all aspects of APA style in both formatting and language. Your proposal will be about 8-10 pages in length, double-spaced, excluding the abstract, title page, references page and appendix (data collection instrument).

You can find student paper formatting guides from APA 7th edition on blackboard in the left-hand main menu under the "Course Materials" heading and at <https://apastyle.apa.org>. These include tips on paper setup, title pages, font, margins, headings, grammar, in-text citations, common references, and more.

Helpful Hints: Before submitting your final paper, review your proposal and check it for:

- **Adequacy:** Does the submission fully address each question in the prompt?
- **Depth:** Does the submission demonstrate an adequate level of research and engagement with the topic?
- **Critical Thinking:** Does the submission provide clear, creative, and strong arguments, with support for those arguments with facts from empirical or theoretical literature using in-text citations?
- **Accuracy:** Are all your sources cited correctly in the text and listed on the reference page? Have you paraphrased carefully and kept direct quotes to only a few short essential quotes? Did you check for spelling, grammar, and formatting?

Submit your final proposal through the assignment link on Blackboard by the due date listed in the Course Schedule.

Overview of Proposal Format Sections and Alignment

Your proposal must contain the sections outlined below in the following order (*NOTE: Be sure to remove the italicized notes and just use the headings.*).

Title Page

Abstract

Title of Paper

(Enter your paper's actual title here, not Title of Paper!)

Start the paper with the title of your paper at the top centered. Then write your introduction paragraphs, but don't use a heading according to APA format.

Problem Statement *This is your first left-justified subheading.*

Literature Review

Use sub-headings that you create to guide the information flow in your literature review.

Research Question and Hypothesis

Methods

Sampling Frame

Study Design

Ethical Considerations

Measures

Data Analysis

Critique of Methodology

Implications and Conclusions

References

Appendix: Data Collection Instrument(s)

Proposal Instructions and Format: Detailed Description

A more detailed description of each section is provided below to help clarify expectations for the proposal. Use the APA guide for student paper setup to check font, margins, etc...

Title Page

Use APA guide for student title pages which includes a page number in the top right corner header for every page.

Abstract

Use APA guide for abstract and keywords format, 250 or less introduction to your study, focusing on research question and methods and keywords

Body of Paper: Describe background and significance of problem you want to research using the following subheadings. Start with an introduction paragraph and then add the sub-heading for the problem statement.

Problem Statement (1-2 paragraphs)

- What problem does your proposal address?
- How many people are affected by this problem?
- Why is this an important social problem?
- Why is your population an important one to study?
- How does it affect other important social issues or focal populations?

Literature Review

(4-5 pages describing what we already know and what we still need to know citing the research article information you have collected; use subheadings to help sort the information into topical areas)

- Describe what is currently known about your target research population from the literature and what is important to know about each variable in your research question
- Describe all of the information from the literature that is important to know about the relationship between the variables in your research question and any other variables or social forces that might influence the variables in your research question
- Define key terms and explain theories that are important for understanding your topic
- Identify consistent findings across studies
- Identify gaps and controversies in the literature
- Summarize the literature's key points and why your study is important and will add new information to the literature base.

Research Question and Hypothesis

(1 paragraph) State your research question and hypothesis. You can have more than one, but you need to explain how you conceptualize and measure each question in this proposal. If your study is qualitative, you may not have a hypothesis.

Methods

Usually around 2-3 pages; you typically don't need to cite any sources for this section. Correct any feedback from homework and assignments and put responses into paragraph format using these subheadings (sampling, design, etc.)

Sampling Frame

- Describe the sampling approach you will use (examples: availability sampling, quota sampling, snowball).
- Define your sampling frame and any inclusion/exclusion criteria for participants in the study.
- Explain how you will recruit study participants (e.g., how, where, when, with what flyers/ads/emails).
- What is your goal for number of participants?

Study Design

- Describe the study design you will use (e.g., online survey, focus group, single-subject, classic experiment) and list the specific steps you will take from beginning to end to carry out your design.
- Talk about the data collection instruments or tools you will use to collect data. You will include an example of the instrument as an appendix of the final paper.

Ethical Considerations

Incorporate the paragraphs from Exercise 3, including any revisions or edits suggested in the instructor's feedback on your assignment

Measures

Explain the operational definition for your independent and dependent variables. Name at least two control variables you could use in your study and state why they are important.

Data Analysis

- If the data showed your hypothesis was true, what would you conclude?
- If the data showed your hypothesis was false, what would you conclude?
- What type of analysis would you most likely use with your data?

Critique of Methodology

- Describe the strengths and limitations of your approach to sampling, ethics, measures, and design.
- How generalizable will your results be to different populations? Why?

Implications and Conclusions

- Discuss how your study will benefit the discipline of social work, your target population, and how it will add to the literature on your topic.
- Describe how you plan to disseminate your research results to stakeholders and to expand knowledge about your topic

References

Use APA format checklist; You must cite a minimum of 6 references from peer-reviewed academic journals

Appendix

Include an example of the data collection instrument(s)

Instructions for the Proposal Slides Presentation

For the final presentation of your research proposal, you need to create 5-6 slides to share with the class about your research proposal. Submit your final slide set by the due date in this assignment link. Be sure to follow these instructions.

Your presentation should:

- Be creative and interesting to view
- Include accurate but brief bullet-point contents (i.e., key points, not paragraphs)
- Explain the following elements of your study proposal:
- Summarize the problem your proposal addresses
- State your research question (i.e., my research question is...) and hypothesis if appropriate
- Describe your research study design (i.e., sampling frame, subject protections, operationalized definitions for your independent and dependent variables)
- Close by sharing how your study might benefit social work and your target population
- Include a reference slide for research cited in your slides.

Practice your Presentation!

You should practice your presentation to ensure you can speak clearly and effectively on your topic as you move through the slides. A script is a good idea. Be sure you have practiced enough times that you don't read each slide word for word.

You will share your slides (no more than 5-6 slides) while you talk about the study using the slides as your guide for your final presentation in the class.