

# Thesis, Special Project Research Planning

## Thesis/Special Project Checklist

The major goal/outcome of this course is the development of a research proposal suitable for completing the Master's thesis or special project requirement. To achieve this goal, the following tasks/activities are prescribed:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

SSN: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Date Completed	Task / Activity
	1. Meet with advisor to discuss research ideas and/or brainstorm research questions and explore research opportunities. Go to <a href="http://www.people.memphis.edu/~prpalmer/theses.htm">www.people.memphis.edu/~prpalmer/theses.htm</a> to review U of M theses titles.
	2. Identify research topic, question. Type an idea paragraph (maximum of one page). State in general terms the purpose, rationale, and feasibility for the proposed research project.
	3. Select thesis/special project chair.
	4. Write topic analysis. Present in outline format as follows (3-5 pages) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Title (proposed)</li> <li>2. Introduction               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Purpose of study</li> <li>b. Rationale, need for study</li> </ol> </li> <li>3. Literature Review               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Key studies and findings directly related to central purpose of study</li> <li>b. Research findings related to ancillary topics, issues</li> <li>c. Key studies related in methodology, instrumentation, and/or content</li> </ol> </li> <li>4. Research Questions and Hypotheses               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Research questions</li> <li>b. Hypotheses</li> </ol> </li> <li>5. Methodology               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Subject/Participants</li> <li>b. Assessment and evaluation instrumentation</li> <li>c. Procedures</li> <li>d. Data collection</li> <li>e. Data analysis (topical)</li> </ol> </li> </ol>
	5. Select thesis/special project committee members. Submit approval form.
	6. Review Graduate School guidelines and checklist for preparation of thesis at <a href="http://www.people.memphis.edu/~gradsch/chklst.htm">www.people.memphis.edu/~gradsch/chklst.htm</a>
	7. Prepare first draft of prospectus; submit to thesis/special project Chair. See attached outline.
	8. Revise prospectus; resubmit to thesis/special project Chair.
	9. Submit prospectus draft to committee members 10 days prior to scheduled prospectus presentation.
	10. Set time, day, and place for prospectus presentation.
	11. Invite faculty and students; prepare announcement of prospectus presentation; post and email.
	12. Obtain committee signatures on thesis/special project approval form.
	13. Prepare final, approved draft of prospectus.
	14. Duplicate copies for committee members.
	15. Complete and submit Application to Conduct Research with Human Subjects Application Form: <a href="http://www.people.memphis.edu/~ressvc/hsform.htm">www.people.memphis.edu/~ressvc/hsform.htm</a>
	16. Submit the following to HSS Graduate Coordinator: (1) Prospectus approval page with signatures, (2) Confirmation of human subjects approval, and (3) Final copy of prospectus.
	17. Committee Chair submits course grade to SIS.
	18. Student registers for thesis/special project course.

## 1. Chapter One: Introduction

**1.1. Introductory paragraph:** Begin with a capsule statement of what is being proposed, and then proceed with an introduction of the subject. The introduction should be comprehensible to an informed lay person and give enough background to enable the reader to place the particular research problem in a context of common knowledge.

**1.2. Statement of the problem:** Make a brief declarative statement that indicates what research question(s) will be addressed in this study. All of the problem elements, including the variables to be studied, should be expressed in an orderly system of relationships. Research questions must be clear, consistent, and measurable. They guide the research design process.

**1.3. Purpose of the study:** Indicate “why” the study is being proposed. Spell out the reason(s) or objective(s) for doing the study. Try to answer the question: “what potential impact will the results of the study have on the current body of knowledge?” **Caveat:** don’t confuse the statement of the problem with the purpose of the study. The statement of the problem tells **what** is to be done; the purpose tells **why**.

**1.4. Need for the study:** Use the literature to elaborate on the purpose of the study, to help show why the study is needed, to explain why it is significant, or to justify its content. The development of this section should try to demonstrate one or more of the following: more knowledge is needed in this area, a knowledge gap exists between the theoretical and practical aspects of the problem, a solution to the problem needs to be explored, and/or current knowledge and/or assumptions related to the problem require validation. Establish or emphasize what is original about the proposed study, what circumstances have changed since related work was done, or what is unique about the proposed study.

**1.5. Delimitations:** In research, this refers to the scope of the study.

**1.6. Limitations:** In research, this refers to possible weaknesses of the study.

**1.7. Assumptions:** Assumptions state what the literature suggests can be assumed to be true for purposes of planning the study. Assumptions serve as the basis for much of the development of the study and then become the basis for the hypotheses.

**1.8. Hypotheses:** Hypotheses are statements that permit the researcher to predict the outcome of the study in advance. Some researchers prefer to express hypotheses in the null form.

## 2. Chapter Two: Review of Literature:

**2.1.** The review of related literature should be a selective, critical summary of recent research on the topic of interest. It may identify gaps or weaknesses in prior studies that can build a case or justify a new investigation. It should follow a logical flow and lead the reader to a clear impression of how the proposed study will build upon what has already been done. Researchers usually organize the literature review in two ways: studies related to the present study in content and/or methodology, and studies classified according to topics. Content literature presents facts, theories, and background kinds of information. Methodology-related studies present information on design, techniques, instrumentation, and analysis.

**2.2.** This chapter should begin with an opening paragraph that relates the literature to the problem and explains how the chapter is organized.

**2.3.** Conclude chapter with a brief summary.

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\*Excerpts from: Baumgartner TA, Strong CH. (1998) *Conducting and reading research in health and human performance*, 2nd ed., WCBrown McGraw-Hill. 10/3/01 mhamrick p.2

**3. Chapter Three: Methods and Procedures:** This chapter should provide a clear, detailed picture of what is to be done and how it will be accomplished in sufficient detail so that another researcher could replicate the study. The following topics should be described:

**3.1. Research Design:** Indicate if the research design is descriptive, experimental, prospective, retrospective, longitudinal, or some combination of these traditional designs.

**3.2. Subjects:** Describe the target population, exactly who will be studied and how they will be selected and/or placed into study groups.

**3.3. Intervention:** If applicable, describe the treatment or intervention that will be used. How will it differ from the control group? How long will the intervention last?

**3.4. Variables:** Describe dependent or outcome variables (presumed effect) and independent or predictor variables (presumed cause).

**3.5. Sources of Information:** Describe the sources of information for the study (medical records, school records, observations, etc.)

**3.6. Instrumentation:** Describe how each variable will be recorded and measured. Justify the selection of each instrument (are they valid and reliable?).

**3.7. Procedures:** Describe the procedures for conducting the research. Indicate what will be done, how and when it will be done, and who will be doing it?

**3.8. Ethical Considerations:** Describe how the confidentiality of students, clients, patients will be maintained throughout the study and after completion of the study. How will informed consent be obtained?

**3.9. Data Analysis:** Describe the statistical procedures that are required to address research questions.

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