

**INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE PREPARATION OF
A RESEARCH PROPOSAL
DEPARTMENT OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION, SPORT, AND HUMAN PERFORMANCE**

To the Master of Science Degree Candidate

This document contains the guidelines for writing a research proposal. The purpose of the document is to provide MS in Sport and Fitness Administration advanced candidates with answers to frequently asked questions about the preparation of the proposal and to provide candidates with the framework on which to build their research proposal.

The submission of the master's research project or thesis proposal is the first step in completing the research project or thesis requirement for the MS in SPFA degree. The written proposal is presented to the research advisor, the reader of the project or thesis committee members, and the department chair for approval. Once all individuals involved in the process have approved the proposal, candidates will prepare an oral defense of the proposal for presentation in PHED 681 – Research Methods course. Guidelines for the oral defense of the proposal are on the departmental website. The completion of the research proposal and oral defense of the proposal are requirements for successful completion of PHED 681. If a candidate transferred the credits for PHED 681 into the program, s/he will still be required to defend her/his proposal in the PHED 681 class, but the individual does not have to be enrolled in the class. The instructor for PHED 681 will arrange an oral defense of the proposal in conjunction with the class.

Style Manual

The PESH Department requires research project and thesis proposals to adhere to the *American Psychological Association Style Manual* (6th edition). All copies must be typed and printed on 8 1/2 x 11 inches, white, and un-punched paper. Only one side of the paper may be used.

Spacing

Use double spacing throughout except in footnotes, indented quotations set off from the text (block quotations), reference entries of more than one line, and materials such as captions or table and appendices of data.

Typeface

The use of uniform typeface and font sizes is required for the research/thesis proposal. The required typeface is Times New Roman font with a 12-point font size.

Margins

The left-hand margin must be one and one-half inches. The right hand margin must be one inch. Top and bottom margins must be at least one inch and not more than one and one-half inches measured from the edge of the paper. Page numbers must be at the bottom of the page and no less than one inch from the edge of the paper.

In general, all pages of the text must have the eight and one-half inch edge of the paper at the top of the page. It may be necessary to place some pictures and tables landscape (e.g., lengthwise) on the paper. When this is done, the top of the table figure should be on the non-binding edge side. Except for prefatory matter (e.g., table of contents, dedication), numbered with lower-case Roman numerals, a research proposal should be numbered consecutively beginning with Arabic number 2 after the opening page.

All pages except the title page are numbered. This includes full page photographs, charts and graphs, the references, and appendices. For the preliminary pages, use small Roman numerals (ii, iii, etc.). Page i is the title page, but the page number is not required on this page. The Table of Contents follows the Title page and is numbered with Arabic number ii.

Format and Chapters in Research Proposal

The research proposal consists of two chapters. The following order should be observed:

1. **Title page.** All research proposals submitted to the Department must contain a title page in the exact form found in Appendix A of this document.
2. **Table of Contents** – Format for the Table of Contents is included in Appendix B.
 - A. Includes all sections of the proposal identified with page numbers.
 - B. Each chapter is a major heading followed by each section of the chapter as a subheading.
 - C. References is a major heading
 - D. Appendices is a major heading
3. **Chapter One - Introduction**
 - A. Introduction
 - 1) No more than two or three paragraphs
 - 2) Does not use a heading for the “Introduction”
 - 3) Establishes the rationale and significance for the study
 - a. Why is this research important?
 - b. Why have other researchers investigated this question?
 - c. What does the study contribute to the discipline or body of knowledge?
 - d. Provides an overview on why the topic is important
 - B. Statement of the Problem
 - 1) Use a heading for this section of the proposal - Statement of the Problem
 - 2) Must be directly related to the content of the introduction.
 - C. Followed by research question(s) or hypothesis(es)
 - 1) Can be stated as a null hypothesis
 - 2) Can be stated as a directional hypothesis
 - 3) Can be a numbered list
 - D. Delimitations
 - 1) Set by researcher to define the scope of the study
 - 2) Can be a numbered list
 - 3) Narrows the scope of the study to a manageable sizes

- 4) Affects generalizability
 - 5) Choices the RESEARCHER makes and controls in the study
 - a) Might be delimited by the sample used (number of participants or who is in the groups)
 - b) Might be delimited by the instrument used or assessment method
 - c) Defines who is in the sample and how the assessment is being made of the sample population
- E. Limitations
- 1) Shortcoming, weaknesses, or influences that affect results that cannot be controlled by the researcher
 - 2) Limitations can be a product of your delimitation
 - 3) Can be a numbered list
 - 4) Limitations include such things as – “Researcher could not control for the honesty of the answers provided by participants on the survey” or “the use of volunteers may bias the data.” This is anything that a researcher cannot directly control.
- F. Definition of Terms
- 1) Operational definitions – How the specific term or variable is defined for the purposes of the study. Examples are listed below.
 - a) e.g., Varsity athlete is operationally defined as any individual that participates on an officially recognized interscholastic varsity sport for one complete season.
 - b) e.g., Self-efficacy Score is operationally defined as participant’s score on Bandura’s (1977) self-efficacy assessment.
 - 2) Should be from a source and the source should be cited
 - 3) Dependent variable(s) must be operationally defined
 - 4) Operational definitions are directly linked to Statement of the Problem
- G. Review of the Related Literature
- 1) Proposal includes an initial review of the related research literature
 - 2) Reviewing the literature will allow candidates to develop their research question
 - 3) This initial review allows candidates to gain enough expertise on their research area to generate an appropriate research question(s), develop tentative procedures for the investigation of the question, and allows candidates to determine their research methodology to be used in answering the research question(s) or hypothesis(es).
 - 4) Review of literature begins with a one paragraph introduction that identifies the various sections of the review.
 - 5) Parts of the Review of Literature
 - a. All review of literatures should have at least three subheadings under the major topic.

- b. For the proposal, each of the subheadings should have at least four to five research studies included in each of the subheading section of the review.
- c. At the end of the review section, there should be a summary of conclusions reached based on the review of the literature.
- d. The Review of literature is more than a simple string of research summaries in a row. In presenting the review of the related research literature, candidates should categorizes similar studies and integrate studies that reached similar conclusions or did not support previous reached conclusions. The review of literature is not simply a menu of various studies but an integrated approach to report research findings in the research area.
- e. The review of literature included as part of the proposal process is just the initial review of literature. For the final project, Chapter 2 will be a complete and thorough review of related research literature associated with the research topic. Although the review of literature is included as part of Chapter 1 in the proposal, it is a separate chapter (Chapter 2) in the final research project or thesis. Candidates will build on this initial review and include many more studies as part of the final research project or thesis. Candidates may need additional subheadings, will add many more studies, and convince the committee or research advisor that candidates have developed expertise in the research area. Candidates will work with their research advisor and reader or the thesis committee to complete Chapter 2 of the thesis or final research project.

4. Chapter 2 – Methods and Procedures

A. Introduction

- 1) Should be one paragraph that identifies the purpose of the study and research question.
- 2) Does restate question(s) as identified in Chapter 1

B. Participants

- 1) Identifies who will be involved in the study
 - a. Number of potential participants
 - b. Demographic breakdown of the participants (age, gender, grade, etc.)
 - c. Volunteers, groups or convenience, randomly assigned, selected participants, etc. must be identified in this section.
 - d. Identify any unique characteristics of the potential population group to be used in the study (i.e., boy varsity tennis players, college freshmen, Division I ADs., etc.)
 - e. State how participants were assigned to a group if appropriate.
- 2) Context of the setting
 - a. Describe the context or setting of the study. For example, is a public recreation program, public school, professional sports, etc.

- b. Are a variety of settings used that different in some specific context. For example, is one a lower socioeconomic school, one a middle socioeconomic school, and the third a upper socioeconomic school. Identify how you determined the various groups used.
 - 3) Reference in this section, by citing the appropriate appendix, any consent forms to be used or specific instruments to be completed including the required IRB application form.
- C. Research Design
- 1) Identify the type of research being conducted such as correlational, quasi-experimental, experimental, survey, descriptive, etc.
 - 2) Identify the independent and dependent variables in the study.
 - 3) Identify the specific statistical procedures to be used to analyze the data including any use of software to analyze the data.
 - 4) Describe any instrument or apparatus to be used
 - a) Must include information on the validity and reliability of the instrument or apparatus being used.
 - b) Provide rationale for the selection of the instrument/apparatus being used.
 - c) If you create a survey or another instrument, how did you establish face validity for the instrument? What specific procedures did you follow?
- G. Procedures
- 1) Provide a complete description of how, when, and where the research is going to be conducted. Anyone should be able to take this section of the paper and replicate the study.
 - 2) How are you going to gather data? How are you getting permission to gather data?
 - 3) When are you going to gather data?
 - 4) Who is going to gather the data? How are they going to be trained to collect the data? Where are you keeping the data or how are you recording the data?
 - 5) Where is the data stored for safe keeping?
 - 6) How are you protecting the confidentiality of the participants? How is the data to be coded?
 - 7) Who will have access to the raw data?
 - 8) Who will have access to the final results? How are the final results to be reported?
- H. Expected Results
- 1) In this section you should discuss what you think you will find for each of your research questions or hypotheses. Your answer should reference your review of literature and what previous research has determined in relationship to your questions.
 - 2) In this section, you must predict an answer for each of your research hypotheses based on your literature review.

5. Appendices

- A. Must include a completed IRB.
- B. Must include any permission request for participation in the study such as parental consent, assent, etc,
- C. Must include a copy of any instrument used in the study.
- D. Might include any protocols to be followed when collecting data.
- E. Might include a data collect instrument or form.

6. References

- A. This section includes any previous study, article, or instrument cited in the paper.
- B. Must follow current APA format for a reference list.

TITLE

A Research Proposal
Presented to the Faculty
Of the
Richard W. Riley College of Education
In Partial Fulfillment
Of the
Requirements for the Degree
Of
Master of Science
In Sport and Fitness Administration
Winthrop University

August, 2010

By

Author

APPENDIX B

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