



Graduate Studies

Project Format Guidelines

**Non-Thesis Option
Laboratory Research
Special Project**

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RESEARCH PROJECT GUIDELINES

The Graduate Research Project Guide is intended to give the student choosing the Non-Thesis Option specific guidelines about conducting the research study, writing, formatting, and submitting research based, in part, on the Thesis Manual for Chapters I, II, and III and Institutional Review Board Guidelines. Students should work closely with their project advisor in their chosen areas of interest to define and develop their proposals. The graduate research project is a scholarly process in which students select a relevant problem in their discipline, conduct research, collect data, and analyze it. Graduate students are encouraged to submit their final research project as an abstract to the appropriate professional journal for possible publication. However, publication is not a requirement for graduation.

Steps in Completing the Research Project Process:

Identifying a Topic for the Research Project

1. Students should select their research project early in their program of study in order to allow ample time to gather data and complete all of the research components required for the final proposal. A student should talk with his/her advisor regarding the timeline to select a topic.
2. Students can pursue a topic that may be in the process of being carried out by a research faculty member or other faculty in the student's discipline.
3. Students can consider a historical or education problem or event to research.
4. Once students select their topics, they can begin review of the literature.
5. Students should seek advisement as to the timeline to enroll in the appropriate discipline research course for formal study and guidance in drafting the required parts of the research project.

The Graduate School recommends the following book as a supplement to the information provided in this guide. A copy is kept in Graduate Studies for reference purposes.

Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association. 6th ed. American Psychological Association: Washington, DC, 2009.

GENERAL DOCUMENT FORMAT

All proposals are written in the future tense. Thus, statements should be stated as, “this proposed study will collect data using...” or Results of this study will be used to” Also, the proposal should be written in third person (“this researcher” should be used). APA style must be used, including tables, headings, and the reference page.

Margins - 1 inch top, bottom and right (p. 229); 1.5 inch left margin(this exception takes into consideration binding)

Font preference and size - The preferred font is 12-pt Times New Roman. (p. 228)

Line Spacing - Double spacing should occur throughout the document, including quotations of 40 or more words (pp. 171 & 229). Never use single-spacing or one-and-a-half spacing except in tables or figures.

Page Numbers - Page numbers should be located in upper right corner, unless specified differently from your advisor. (p. 230)

Paragraph Indentation - Paragraphs should be indented 5-7spaces or 1/2 inch. (p. 229)

Line Length and Alignment – Do not justify lines in the manuscript. Do not divide words at the end of a line, and do not use the hyphenation function to break words at the ends of lines. Let a line run short rather than break a word at the end of a line.

PROJECT ADVISORY COMMITTEE (PAC)

A Project Advisory Committee (PAC) is selected prior to commencing any research project work by the student. Development of the research project effort should proceed in an orderly fashion. The student who anticipates graduating in a timely manner needs to adhere to the following schedule of activities:

1. Early topic selection
2. Selection of Research Project Chair
 - a. The research project chair must be a member of the graduate faculty in your discipline. A time line should be developed with the guidance of the research graduate chair.
 - b. The research project committee members should be selected under the guidance of the research project chair (a minimum of two members in addition to the chair).
3. Selection of Research Project Committee Members
 - a. Research Project members should hold a minimum of a master’s degree. Two of the three PAC members should be in your discipline, including the chair.

- b. A third member may be chosen from any qualified Alcorn State University faculty, or a qualified community member holding a master's degree or higher.* If a student selects a member outside of the university, a letter of explanation regarding why a thesis member outside of the university was chosen needs to be sent to the Dean of Graduate Studies, along with the proposed member's curriculum vita. A letter of approval for the proposed committee member should be obtained from the Dean of Graduate Studies.
 - c. The student must be enrolled for Special Research Project or Advanced Research in order to hold conferences with the PAC.
4. Appointment of the Project Advisory Committee Form
 - a. An "Appointment of Research Project Advisory Committee" form with committee member signatures should be completed and turned in to your research project chair.

(See Appendix A)
 5. Invitation to prospective committee members should be issued in writing by the student.
 6. The PAC committee selection will be submitted to the Department Chair of the student's discipline which will then be forwarded to Graduate Studies.

The PAC chairperson is responsible for student guidance regarding scheduling of activities for research project development. Although the student is ultimately responsible for his or her own work, all PAC members are accountable for the quality of the research project.

RESEARCH PROJECT DEFENSE AND SUBMISSION OF PROPOSAL TO ASU INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB)

Proposal Defense:

1. The student is responsible for coordinating with the Project Advisory Committee (PAC) chair and members regarding scheduling of the proposal defense, scheduling the room, and obtaining needed equipment for the presentation. The student will provide all committee members a copy of the proposal one week in advance of the meeting. It is recommended that the proposal defense be scheduled during the first 2 or 3 hours enrollment in Thesis.
2. The proposal defense may be either a poster presentation, a visual presentation using electronic formats such as PowerPoint, or a working meeting with the PAC committee as determined by the PAC Chair in consultation with the student.
3. During the formal proposal meeting, the PAC will approve the research proposal (chapters 1-3) as acceptable for research. Changes to be made will be specified during the proposal meeting. Once the research proposal is approved, the student and committee are committed to that research proposal as it is written, except for extraordinary circumstances, after

- acceptance, no substantive changes will be made to the proposal, only minor editorial changes should be made.
4. Once the research proposal has been accepted. The “Project Proposal Approval Form” is to be signed by all PAC members and given to the Chair of their discipline (Appendix E).
 - a. A copy of the PAC approved research proposal is forwarded to the Dean of Graduate Studies, along with a copies of the Research Proposal Approval Forms(four copies), by the Chair of the specific Discipline.

Institutional Review Board Application:

1. Every research project must have clearance from ASU Institutional Review Board prior to implementation. This requirement also applies to studies using survey instruments (See Appendix B).
2. The Informed Consent form must be submitted with the IRB Application. This form is to include a description of the study procedures; purpose; risk/benefits; time required of participants; assurance of confidentiality; withdrawal allowed at any time; and a signature space for the participant.
3. In some situations, the study must also have IRB approval within the institution where the study is conducted. The student needs to allow sufficient time for IRB approvals that may take up to four weeks.
4. After approval of the research project, the PAC chair will direct the student through the procedures for IRB approval of the research plan. The student is to complete the IRB Application and return the form to the PAC chair (See Appendix B).
 - a. If you place the form in your computer for completion, put the questions in bold and clearly set the answers apart from the questions.
 - b. Do not bind the application;
 - c. Include a title page in the proposal.
5. The PAC chair provides the following to the chair of their discipline (or discipline secretary), *to be forwarded to the Institutional Review Board Chair.
 - a. One copy of the proposal.
 - b. The appropriately completed IRB application.
 - c. A cover letter from the PAC chair to the IRB chair requesting the proposal to be reviewed by the IRB.

6. The PAC chair will notify the student when the IRB approval is received. A copy of the IRB decision letter, with signatures, is given to the discipline chair (or secretary) to place in the student's file. The original is given to the student for inclusion in the final copies of the research project.
7. Following IRB approval, data collection can begin. The student is to communicate any problems in this phase of the research study to the PAC chair. A full PAC meeting may be called if necessary.
8. Upon completion of data collection, the student will write the finding and discussion sections of the thesis. The student will then prepare for thesis defense. A student must be submitted to candidacy and must obtain approval of the entire PAC committee prior to scheduling the research defense. The defense is to take place no sooner than the final semester of course work. Students should check with their research project advisor regarding deadlines for Scheduling the Oral Defense.

ORDER AND STYLE FOR THE RESEARCH PROJECT

Ordering of Content:

1. Parts:
 - a. Title Page
 - Is not numbered
 - NOTE: the date is the date of graduation
 - Margins: 1" top: 1" right: 1.5" left: 1" bottom
 - Select a title that summarizes the main idea of the study
 - Do not exceed 10-12 words in the title
 - Avoid abbreviations
 - See example in Appendix D
 - b. Copyright Page (Optional)
 - Is not numbered
 - Margins: 1" top: 1" right: 1.5" left: 1" bottom
 - c. Approval Form Signature Page
 - Is not numbered
 - All signatures must be original and in black ink
 - NOTE: the date is the date of research project defense.
 - Margins: 1" top: 1" right: 1.5" left: 1" bottom
 - See example in Appendix E
 - d. Dedication (Optional)
 - Start numbering, center, bottom of page, small Roman numeral, count the first 2 or 3 pages that do not have page number appearing. This will be page iii or iv.
 - Margins: 1" top: 1" right: 1.5" left: 1" bottom

- e. Acknowledgement (Optional)
 - Margins: 1" top: 1" right: 1.5" left: 1" bottom

- f. Abstract
 - Begin on new page
 - A brief and concise summary of the study: Purpose, results, conclusions.
 - No more than 250 words.
 - Use abbreviations, use digits instead of spelling out numbers, use future tense.
 - Margins: 1" top: 1" right: 1.5" left: 1" bottom
 - See example in Appendix F

- g. Table of Contents
 - Use the same heading system that is used in text
 - Single space within each section; double space between sections.
 - Margins: 1" top: 1" right: 1.5" left: 1" bottom

- h. List of Tables
 - Tables are numbered Table 1, Table 2, etc.
 - Margins: 1" top: 1" right: 1.5" left: 1" bottom

- i. List of Figures
 - Figures are numbered: Figure 1, Figure 2, etc.
 - Margins: 1" top: 1" right: 1.5" left: 1" bottom

- j. List of symbols, abbreviations, definitions
 - Margins: 1" top: 1" right: 1.5" left: 1" bottom

TYPING THE RESEARCH PROJECT

Style

- a. Print font is to be: Times New Roman
 - Use *italic* font only for book or journal titles or special emphasis. Use *italics* as specified in APA Manual for headings.

- b. Point size:
 - 12 point for all text
 - Tables and figures may have 10 point

- c. Margins:
 - 1" top: 1" right: 1.5" left: 1" bottom

d. Spacing:

- Double spacing
- Single space table of contents
- One space between words
- Indent at beginning of each paragraph
- Direct quotations greater than 4 lines, single space and offset by 4 spaces.

e. Line length and alignment

- Do not divide words at the end of a line
- Do not use the hyphenation function to break words at the ends of lines; let a line run short rather than break a word at the end of a line

Pagination

- a. Introductory or preliminary pages are numbered with lower case Roman numerals at the bottom center of each page and 1" from bottom of page.
- b. Pages should be numbered sequentially throughout the research project. Preliminary pages are numbered as follows:
 1. The Title Page is counted as page i
 2. The Abstract is counted as page ii
 3. The remaining preliminary pages are numbered with lower case Roman Numerals (iii, iv, v, vi, etc.)
- c. Beginning with Chapter 1, pages are numbered with Arabic numbers 1" from top of page and 1" from right margin and continuing throughout, including text, illustrative materials, references, and appendices...

Text:

- a. References in the text are cited using the author's (s') last name and the year of publication, separated by a comma, all placed in parenthesis. A page number is included for a direct quote.* (APA format).
- b. *Use APA format (latest edition) for all headings and subheadings.

Paper

- a. Drafts for School of Graduate Studies review may be printed on any type paper.
- b. All required copies for publishing must be printed on 8.5 X 11 inch paper, 20 pound – 25% cotton, printed on one side only.
- c. The approval/signature page cannot be copied; it must have original signatures in black ink. Four (4) original signature pages must be submitted to School of Graduate Studies for the Dean's signature.

Number of Required Copies

- a. The total number of required copies is four (1 for the School of Graduate Studies, 1 for the university library, 1 for the respective department, and 1 for the student.)

Grammar

- a. Future tense used throughout the research project
- b. Future tense used to express an action or condition that will occur at a specific time in the future
- c. Subject and verb agreement
- d. Spelling is correct
- e. Correct use of homophones
- f. Words used correctly throughout research project

Binding

- a. Standard bound hard copy is black
- b. When full-page prints of photographs are desired, the image area of the print must conform to the same margins as the text

SPECIAL GUIDELINES FOR BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES

There are several research options available to Biological Sciences students as contributors to their field of study. Students collaborate with their advisor to determine the best research option to pursue. The following detail the options.

Special Project (Research Review)

Non-Thesis Option

1. Students pursuing the Non-Thesis Option in Biology will not do laboratory research (wet-lab research) under the direction of research mentors. Students will complete an exhaustive review of research literature related to a specific topic of interest and research significance (project paper).
2. Special Project Defense – Biological Sciences will conduct dual evaluations of the Special Project. The first evaluation will be conducted on the written document and the second evaluation will be the student's Oral Defense.
3. A student may include graphs, figures or tables showing data from an interesting piece of literature which may add value to certain explanations or presentation of results to qualify the significance of the research done and published in a refereed journal paper.

Laboratory Research

1. Students include Chapters I Introduction, II Literature Review, and III Methodology. Methodology should include research design through data collection, analysis, interpretation, and presentation in appropriate format plus the other required sections in Chapter III.

SPECIAL GUIDELINES FOR GRADUATE NURSING

In addition to Chapters I, II, and III, the School of Graduate Nursing requires Chapters IV and V which are explained below.

CHAPTER IV PROJECT

Background – Restate key parts of your background and include how this project will impact or was impacted by the information you develop.

Purpose – Restate your purpose again.

Copy of Brochure, Pamphlet, Tool, Video Transcript, etc. – Provide a copy of your project work. If it is a brochure with copied information from other sources, references are required in APA format. Provide written documentation of a video in transcript format if applicable.

CHAPTER V PROJECT

Introduction – State a brief introduction. Summarize what you did in the first three chapters briefly.

Evaluation – Evaluation of project process by giving statistics of any information collected using graphs, tables or any other means to express your success or outcomes. A narrative may be used if needed.

Limitations – State the limitations again.

Conclusion, Implications and Recommendations – Emphasize the high points of your findings. There should be a relationship to the literature review: Did your project correlate with previous research or did you find something different? How can future projects be recommended for practice?

CHAPTER I

Online Computer Systems

Introduction

Introduces the reader to the area of interest; builds a case for doing the project; provides information regarding the source of the problem; incidence, prevalence, and human and financial costs.

Background of the Study

Statement of the Research Problem

Statement of the problem should include the basic difficulty, area of concern, and/or perceived need for the study.

Purpose of the Study

Statement of the purpose of the project.

Theoretical Framework

Placement of the problem in a theoretical context. The explanation of theory and that systematically explain the relationship among the phenomenon related to the problem. Conclude with section that applies the theory and concept to your project.

Research Objective(s), Question(s), or Hypothesis(es)

Theoretical and Operational Definitions

Provide the theoretical and operational definition of each variable indicated in the statement of purpose. Only include terms that may not be well understood by a layperson outside of your field. Information in this section is formatted in paragraphs just like information in any other sub-heading. Bold all terms, but not their definitions. The use of bold for each term is for emphasis, not to indicate the beginning of a new subheading. Treat each definition as if you were quoting from a dictionary. For example, indicate that it is quoted material by adding the **page number** and putting it into **quotation marks if less than 40 words**.

Assumptions

Discuss any assumptions here.

Significance of the Study

Summary

CHAPTER II

Review of the Literature

No sub-headings are indicated for this chapter because they will vary considerably from research paper to research paper. The format of headings and sub-headings depends upon the way you have organized your thoughts via the use of heading *levels* in your paper. Provide introductory paragraph(s) which includes the purpose of the research project, databases used to conduct the comprehensive review of the literature, and identifies the main topics to be addressed.

The student should place headings in their appropriate spot on the page and use boldface formatting as indicated. Summarize key articles pertinent to the topic. If there is agreement among many researchers regarding the topic, summarize areas of agreement and report in a parsimonious manner. If many research studies have been done on a topic, limit the review to the last 5 years unless there is a seminal article (need to justify use as such). If details about a specific article are in order, provide information regarding subjects, variables, setting, design, approach, definition, instrumentation, statistical findings, clinical significance, and conclusions. Describe any limitations or deficits in the study.

Summarize each major topic so that the reader will understand how these articles have influenced your project or how you will improve upon them in your project.

Chapter III

Methodology

Begin with an introduction. Some suggestions include reiterating the statement of the problem and briefly discussing what this chapter will include. Sections to be addressed might include subject selection and description, instrumentation, data collection procedures, data analysis, and limitations.

Introduction

Research Design

Describe the specific type of research design used in the study.

Subject Selection and Description

Discuss the sample and population. (Description of sample and sample size, if appropriate)
Provide a description of eligibility and ineligibility, if appropriate.

Ethics

Instrumentation

Talk about the survey used, if applicable. Was it created for this purpose or did you find it somewhere? Identify the name of the instrument, type of instrument, concepts measured by the instrument, how scores are calculated and their meaning, validity, and reliability of the instrument, and how long it will take to complete the instrument (if appropriate). If the instrument was developed by the student, indicate if the tool was evaluated by a panel of experts.

Data Collection Procedures

A 45 question survey was administered....

Data analysis

How was the data analyzed? Example: A number of statistical analyses were used in this study. The Statistical Program for Computer Sciences version 10.0 (SPSS, 2002) was used to analyze the data. Independent T-Test analyses were conducted... Evaluate the effectiveness of your Project, e.g., program, presentation, module, etc. Suggest specific modifications (content, style, participants, etc) based on your evaluation.

Limitations

Discuss methodological limitations or procedural weaknesses.

Summary

Provide a succinct summary of the findings of your project. If a pilot study, report (a) demographic findings (frequency, range, mean, (b) findings by hypotheses (supported or not supported and provide statistical results and level of significance). Tables may be used to present findings; however, no table should exist without a preceding narrative.

State the specific recommendations for future projects and studies that logically extend from your Project.

REFERENCES

References: Always start your reference list on a new page.

Margins – 1” top: 1” right: 1.5” left: 1” bottom.

Page title - The word **References** should appear centered at the top of the page. If you have only 1 citation the title should be **Reference**.

Line Spacing - Double space between each line. (p. 180)

Alignment - The first line of each entry should align with the left margin. All subsequent lines should be indented 5 spaces or set a hanging indent at 1/2 inch. (p. 180)

Order of entries - Alphabetical order by author. If there is no author use the title of the document. If you have more than one entry by the same author, then arrange by year beginning with the earliest publication. (p. 181). Follow model below.

Author: Welty, N.

Last name first, abbreviate first and middle names. End with a period.

Year of Publication: (2010).

In parentheses, list the year of publication, which appears on the title page or the title page verso (back side of title page). Follow the parentheses with a period.

Title & subtitle of the book: *What variables appear to work in stress management programs in the workplace and how effective are these programs?* The title and subtitle are separated by a colon.

Capitalize only the first word of the title and subtitle and all proper nouns or names. Italicize the title and end with a period or if it has a question mark in the title, that is sufficient.

Status of Publishing: Unpublished research project.

Use the words unpublished research project followed by a comma. If it is a project, then use the words unpublished research project.

Name of Institution Where Degree was Granted: The University of Arizona.

The full name of the college or university followed by a comma should be used.

Place of Institution: Duluth, Minnesota. For U.S. cities use the city name alone: Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, New York, Philadelphia, and San Francisco. For all others, add the standard postal abbreviations for states. Separate place from publisher with a colon. If more than one city is given, use the first only. End the citation with a period.

Appendices

APPENDIX A

Appointment of Project Advisory Committee

APPOINTMENT OF THESIS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Thesis Topic: _____

Student: _____

Committee Members:

Chair: _____

Member: _____

Member: _____

Outside Member(s) (if any): _____

Date

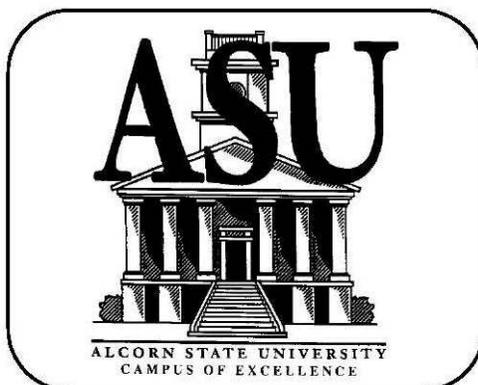
Signature (Department Chair)

(Appendix B: Institutional Review Board Application)

ALCORN STATE UNIVERSITY

OR IRB-87-03

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD



APPLICATION AND PROCEDURES

FOR

PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS IN RESEARCH

Submitted by: _____ Date: _____

Supervisor/Advisor: _____ Date: _____

**APPLICATION TO ALCORN STATE UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL
REVIEW BOARD FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS IN RESEARCH**

Instructions: Please read the instructions before completing the application.

No research involving human subject(s) is to be conducted without prior written approval of the IRB.

1. Name: _____
(Applicant)

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Department: _____

Title: _____

2. Title of Project: _____

3. Research Project Period: From _____ To _____

4. Funding Source: _____

5. Site of Research: _____

6. Brief Description of Research: _____

7. Give details of the procedures that relate to the subjects' participation, including at a minimum the following information. Use additional page(s) if necessary.
- a) How were the subjects selected and recruited? (Append copy of letter or ad or transcript of verbal announcement.)
 - b) What inducement, if any, is offered?
 - c) Number and salient characteristics of subjects – age range, sex, institutional affiliation, other pertinent characterization(s).
 - d) If a cooperating institution is involved – school, hospital, prison, etc. – has written permission been obtained?
(Append letter)
 - e) Number of times observations will be made.
 - f) What do the subjects do, or what is done to them in the study? (Append copy of questionnaires or test instruments, or description of procedure to be conducted on the subject.)
 - g) Is it clear to the subject that their participation is fully voluntary?
 - h) Is it clear to the subjects that they can withdraw at any time?
 - i) Is it clear to the subjects that they can refuse to answer any specific question that may be asked them?
 - j) Cite your experience with this type of research.

8. How do you intend to obtain the subjects' informed consent? If in writing, attach a copy of the consent form. If not in writing, include a written summary of what is to be said to the subject(s), and justify the reason that oral rather than written consent is being used. Also, explain how you will ascertain that the subjects understand what they are agreeing to.

9. In your view, what benefits may result from the study that would justify asking the subjects to participate?

Applicant's Signature

Faculty Advisor's Signature
For Student Applicant

Date

APPENDIX C

SAMPLE RESEARCH PROJECT FORMAT (COVER)

**Title of Research Project, Centered
and Double-Spaced**

A RESEARCH PROJECT

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF SCIENCE

IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF

ALCORN STATE UNIVERSITY

JANE DOE, BSN

ALCORN STATE, MISSISSIPPI

MAY 10, 2012

(Appendix D: Title Page)

**Title of Research Project, Centered
and Double-Spaced**

A RESEARCH PROJECT

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF SCIENCE

IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF

ALCORN STATE UNIVERSITY

**Name of Degree/Department
i.e., SCHOOL OF AGRICULTURE, RESEARCH, EXTENSION, AND
APPLIED SCIENCES**

BY

JANE DOE, BSN

ALCORN STATE, MISSISSIPPI

MAY 10, 2012

(No page number on the actual title page)

(Appendix E: Signature Page)

ALCORN STATE UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF COMPUTER AND INFORMATION SCIENCES

March 2, 2012

To the Dean of Graduate Studies:

I am submitting herewith a research project written by John Doe entitled "Title of Research Project." I have examined the final copy of this research project for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Computer and Information Sciences.

Marlon Berry, Ph.D.
Research Project Advisory Committee Chair

We have read this research project and
Recommend it for acceptance:

Mary Sue White, Ph.D.
Committee Member

John Alto, Ph.D.
Committee Member

Accepted:

Jan Blackmore, Ph.D.
Dean, School of Arts and Sciences

Donzell Lee, Ph.D.
Dean, Graduate Studies

(Appendix F: Abstract Page)

Abstract

The label *Abstract* should appear in uppercase and lowercase letters, centered, at the top of the page. Type the abstract itself as a single paragraph without paragraph indentation (no bold, formatting, italics, underlining, or quotation marks).

Beginning with the next line, write a concise summary of the key points of your research. (Do not indent.) Your abstract should contain at least your research topic, research questions, participants, methods, results, data analysis, and conclusions. You may also include possible implications of your research and future work you see connected with your findings. Your abstract should be a single paragraph double-spaced. Abstracts should be limited to 250 words.

You may also want to list keywords from your paper in your abstract. To do this, center the text and type *Keywords:* (italicized) and then list your keywords. Listing your keywords will help researchers find your work in databases.

i.e. *Keywords:* aging, attention, emotion

Double space the text and use the same 1 inch margins as in the balance of the paper. Consult pages 25-27 in the APA manual for some tips regarding the qualities of a good abstract. Pay close attention to grammar and spelling; papers with misspellings and typographical errors will be returned as will abstracts that do not follow the format as illustrated in this document.