

## **Research Informed Practice I: Final Paper Research Proposal Guidelines**

*Length:* Cover page + 6-8 pages content + References & Appendix (including measurements/research instruments)

*Format:* APA 7th Edition.

For resources about the use of APA see link:

[https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research\\_and\\_citation/apa\\_style/apa\\_formatting\\_and\\_style\\_guide/general\\_format.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/apa_style/apa_formatting_and_style_guide/general_format.html)

*Dates for articles referenced/cited:* Articles should be from within the past 10 years (speak to your professor if you have anything older you feel should be included).

### **General guidelines**

A research proposal outlines a research plan. Students will NOT be asked to execute their research plan.

In the research proposal, students will learn to propose a study advancing knowledge in the area of trauma-informed social work as it relates to their focus of practice (macro or clinical) and population of interest.

Proposals will describe a quantitative research plan. Students interested in developing qualitative research proposal writing skills can apply to the Qualitative Research Methods doctoral seminar as part of their elective class plan.

Some students may feel overwhelmed by the brevity of the proposal and its strict guidelines. We trust that this is a useful exercise to socialize first semester students to professional social work practice. Social work is a documented profession, thus, writing with clarity is critical for social worker's development and the care of clients. Additionally, many social workers must follow writing guidelines across forms, applications, and charts. Lastly, as students master the critical thinking and writing skills required for this assignment, they will come to realize that these are useful to complete other classes' assignments, enhancing their performance across the curriculum.

Writing a research proposal is an iterative process. Students cannot expect to write the proposal linearly; each section will evolve in parallel as they gain a greater understanding of the research development process.

### **Research Proposal Structure**

**Cover page** 1 page

APA 7th edition.

## **Section 1: Specific Aims** 1 page

This section is a brief summary of your whole proposal. After reviewing the Specific Aims section, a reader should clearly understand:

- What do you want to study (specific topic, constructs, and variables);
- Your research problem in the context of your population of interest (e.g., veterans, immigrant children, mothers, etc.);
- The main theory grounding your research approach;
- Why does that problem warrant additional research;
- By which research approach (e.g., exploratory, clinical research) and method will you study this issue (e.g., survey research);
- What aims do you specifically propose to achieve in your study;
- Finally, and only if possible, the potential hypothesis that you will test in your research.

The specific structure of the section is:

1<sup>st</sup> paragraph: What is your topic, which should be a trauma-related topic in the context of your specific population as it relates to your focus of practice (macro or clinical). Briefly define your main variables and describe your population. Describe the scope of your problem in your population of interest (e.g., prevalence of PTSD among refugees).

2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph: Briefly summarize what is known about your topic of interest (this second paragraph is developed after completing the Background Section).

3<sup>rd</sup> paragraph: Describe what research methods will you use for your study (this paragraph is developed after you complete the Methods section of your proposal). The paragraph ends with the following statement: "The specific aim/s of this research project is/are:"

4<sup>th</sup> paragraph: List up to two specific aims. If you are able to state hypothesis linked to each Specific Aim, list these in this section.

5<sup>th</sup> paragraph: If you have room left, you can close this section listing the social work/social justice/policy/etc. implications related to your study.

## **Section 2: Background** Up to 2 page

This section outlines what is known about your area of research as it relates to your focus of practice (macro or clinical) and population of interest. You will learn more about how to write this section in the first workshop, "Writing a Literature Review."

For the literature review, you will need to review and include information about the following topics:

- a) Primary sources reporting demographic data related to your population of interest (e.g., US Census Bureau). You can use up to two primary sources for this information.
- b) Primary sources reporting epidemiological data related to your main trauma related variable/s of interest (e.g., prevalence) in your population of interest. You can find these data in

health, research, advocacy or other related sources (for example, CDC). You can use up to two primary sources for this information.

c) Primary sources describing previous research about your topic of interest. Include only peer-reviewed publications. Your review could be positive or negative, depending on the quality of this research. For example, you can then point out limitations/recommendations from an article that you plan to address in your research proposal. You can use up to three primary sources for this section.

d) At least one paragraph integrating points (a), (b), and (c), and highlighting gaps in the previous knowledge that justify the need to do your research.

### **Section 3: Conceptual framework** Up to 1 page

In the conceptual framework section of your proposal, you will connect your area of research with a theory informing this area of inquiry. You can use a trauma theory in this section, and if there is not a specific trauma theory applicable to your area of interest (for example, war refugee trauma), you can combine it with one additional theory for a total of two integrated theories articulated within one conceptual framework informing your approach.

This section includes the operationalization of the variable/s in your study, which should be aligned with the theoretical framework informing your proposal.

In writing this section, you will connect your proposal's specific aims, variables and their operationalization, with the theory informing this area of research. You will learn more about this section in the first research workshop.

### **Section 4: Methods** Up to 4 page

This section is composed of three sub-sections:

- Measurement/s
- Sampling/study participants
- Recruitment

*Measurement/s:* In this sub-section you will write about the way in which you will measure the variable/s you conceptualized in the Conceptual Framework section. You will describe the standardized scales that you propose to use, including information about its potential sub-scales (or sections), items, scoring, and application to your population of interest. You will also include information about the scale reliability and validity. All this information should be supported by references. You will learn how to write this section during the Research Workshop : Measurements.

*Sampling/study participants:* In this section you include detailed information of who will participate in your study (inclusion criteria), and who will not participate (exclusion criteria). You will also include information about your sampling strategy. You will learn how to write this section during the Research Workshop: Sampling and recruitment.

*Recruitment:* In this sub-section you will describe how will you actually collect the data for your study (including the study design), and describe when, where, and by whom will your data be collected. You will mention information about your consent process, and about the qualifications and training of the research assistants helping with your project (if any). You will learn how to write this section during the Research Workshop: Sampling and recruitment.

## **References**

APA style references of cited bibliography