

**MASTER OF EDUCATION STYLE GUIDE:
A CLARIFICATION OF THE SIXTH ED.
APA PUBLICATION MANUAL**

November, 2011

Master of Education follows the *APA Publication Manual*, 6th Edition. This style guide describes exceptions and provides clarifications for some aspects of the project proposal and final report.

Clarification of Some Rules

Formatting

Typeface. Times New Roman, 12 point, default in some programs is a san serif font. The typeface needs to be changed for the entire document including the header.

Spacing. Some word processing software, by default, adds an extra space after a paragraph. Use the paragraph dialogue box to select “don’t add space between paragraphs of the same style.” All other text is double spaced, including block quotations, tables, and references.

Automatic tabs. Paragraphs should be indented 0.5” using the tab key, *not* the space bar. Be sure to move the tab over for headings. The heading should be centered between margins, not between the left tab and right margin.

Formatting the running head. To make a proper running head, insert a header that allows for the running head to be flush left, in all capitals. This formatting can be accomplished using the *Header* tab and selecting the left position in the drop down menu. Be sure to then change to the correct font.

Page numbering. All pages should be numbered beginning with the title page. The page numbers should be in the same typeface of the paper and placed in flush right within the header. Tab to the far right on the same line as the Header, click on the *Page Number* tab, a drop down menu will appear. Click on *Current Position*, and the page will be set. Suppress the running head on the title page of the proposal and final project paper by using the *Design* tab under the *Header & Footer Tools*. Click on *Different First Page*, and it will automatically delete

the information on the title page leaving the second page numbered correctly with the running head.

Justification and margins. The entire paper should be left justified. The margins should be 1” for all margins with the exception of a 1.5” *left* margin for the final project to facilitate binding. Be aware that this change in margins will affect your page numbering.

Figures

As with developing tables, your figures should be self-explanatory and stand by themselves without a narrative needed. Be sure to label each item appropriately and descriptively.

With graphs, there are appropriate types to use for different situations and purposes:

- *Line graphs* are useful in showing trends over time and between two or more factors.
- *Bar graphs* are effective in comparing magnitude and size.
- *Pie graphs (or circle graphs)* are helpful in showing the relationship between the whole and its parts.

Be sure to label each aspect of your figure so that the reader can properly and appropriately interpret the graph.

Format for Final Project

Preliminary Pages

Immediately following the title page is the Acknowledgements page, which is optional. The next pages should be in the following order: Table of Contents, List of Tables, List of Figures (if Tables or Figures are present in the body of the project), and Abstract. Each of these pages should use a Level 1 heading.

Table of Contents

The Table of Contents contains all major headings in the paper. Sub-levels may be used but should be consistent throughout the Table of Contents. Generally pre-pages (Acknowledgments, Abstract, etc.) are not listed in the Table of Contents although they are numbered according to the information above. Be sure the headings and subheadings are capitalized as they appear in the text with each subheading tabbed 0.5” as shown in the example. Note that no bold is used within the table of contents.

Set the decimal tab stop so that page numbers will be flush right and that periods will follow the headings or subheadings to the page numbers. This can be done in MS Word by the following process:

1. On the **Home** tab, in the **Paragraph** menu, click **Tabs**.
2. Under **Tab stop position**, type 5.99”, or select an existing tab stop to which you want to add leader characters (leader character: A solid, dotted, or dashed line that is used in a table of contents and that fills the space used by a tab character.).
3. Under **Alignment**, select the right alignment for text typed at the tab stop.
4. Under **Leader**, click the leader option you want, and then click **Set**.

List of Tables

Type the table titles exactly as they appear in the text. Titles and page numbers must be the same size and font as the text. Use decimal tab stops as described in the Table of Contents.

List of Figures

Type the captions of the figures exactly as they appear in the text. Titles and page numbers must be the same size and font as the text. Use decimal tab stops as described in the Table of Contents section.

Exceptions to APA Publication Manual for the Proposal and Final Project

Title Page

The example project shows how this page should be written. At the proposal stage, the word *proposal* should be substituted for project.

Chapters or Main Sections

Each main section heading or chapter begins on a new page. Use a page break to place the heading at the top of the page. This action is accomplished in two ways: Insert page break or press <CTRL> + Enter with the cursor in front of the heading. Main section titles should be centered, ALL CAPS, **bold**: i.e. **NATURE OF THE PROBLEM, PURPOSE, METHOD, RESULTS, DISCUSSION, REFERENCES, and APPENDICES**. This level is not described in the APA Manual. For clarity, it will be called Level 0.

APA manual describes what the Results section should include. In some qualitative or narrative studies, this section may be titled Findings. In some qualitative studies it makes sense to combine the Results and Discussion sections, but that combination will be at the discretion of the committee chair.

In some cases, in addition to a reference list, you may also have a bibliography. A bibliography is used to list sources that are *not cited* in the literature but were used as background information or knowledge building during the project.

Tips for Better Academic Writing

APA 6 is very clear in its description of academic writing. Refer to chapters 3 and 4 for the descriptions of *Writing Clearly and Concisely* and *Mechanics of Style* respectively.

However, several mistakes are made on a regular basis by many master's students. Below are some specific ideas to improve a candidate's academic writing.

Language

Anthropomorphism. This problem appears in writing when human characteristics are given to inanimate objects or animals. An example: The school decided to have recess at 10 a.m. In the example “the school” cannot “decide.” The correct way to write the sentence: The teachers at the school decided to have recess at 10 a.m.

Tense. Maintaining proper verb tense throughout the paper helps the reader. In the proposal (and in the final project), the **Literature Review** should be written in past, active voice tense. It is best to avoid helping verbs such as: had, have, has, was, and were. For the proposal, the **PURPOSE** and **METHOD** sections are written in future tense. When preparing for the final defense of the project, those two sections are rewritten to reflect past tense.

Declarative language. Although APA writing style allows for sentences or paragraphs to begin by referencing the author [e.g., Smith and Jones (2010) stated that educated women are more likely to....], writing this way tends to make the sentences choppy and the actual research that the authors did becomes less of the focal point. The better way is to begin with the actual findings of the research finishing with the citation in parentheses at the end of the statement [e.g., Educated women are more likely to ... (Smith & Jones, 2010).].

Noun/pronoun agreement. Because the English language uses gender specific single pronouns (he/she, his/her) and APA writing style requires gender neutrality whenever possible, it is suggested that using the plural form of nouns helps the noun/pronoun agreement dilemma. So instead of saying, “The teacher should be aware of students in their classroom” which is incorrect; rewrite the sentence to read, “Teachers should be aware of the students in their classrooms.”

Second person pronouns. Always avoid using the pronouns *you* and *your* when writing academic and scholarly papers. Many times these words can be avoided by substituting a noun.