

Research Paper and Oral Defense – GPIDEA Masters

There are 3 basic parts for completing the Final Exam Requirements. They are outlined below followed by some guidance on how to prepare the materials for each component.

Part I – An Essay of your Career Goals

Students will submit a one-two page essay outlining their career goals now that they have completed their degree programs. This summary may include information about how the educational program has influenced their future direction. The intent of this part of the process is for the committee to have the opportunity to get to know the candidate a bit better before the testing process. The students will not be assessed on their personal or professional goals, but these goals may be referenced in the questions from the Research Paper as there are relevant to the topic.

Part II – Written summation and proposal for investigation into a Gerontological Related Problem or Contemporary Issue of

For the written part of the exam please choose a problem associated with aging that has yet to be addressed sufficiently by practitioners. Why has this problem not been resolved? What can be done to address this issue and what evidence do you have of the efficacy of the interventions you suggest? Can you identify gaps in the research? This is an opportunity for you to explore the evidence-based research that describes “how we know what we know” as well as an opportunity to help define, “what is still not known,” and suggest further research strategies to build the body of knowledge.

Submit a ten to fifteen page paper responding to these questions. The committee will be looking for evidence that you can integrate knowledge from your degree program as well as demonstrate problem solving skills. The paper should be double-spaced and referenced in APA style.

Part III – An Oral Defense of your Paper.

For the oral exam all students have the option of doing the exam by telephone, Skype or in person at the Center on Aging office (or another on campus location). During the oral examination you will be asked to briefly outline the key points from your paper. Your committee will have some questions for you related to your paper, the literature you consulted, the problem you have selected, and the methods you are proposing to investigate the issues.

Another line of questioning will relate to your career goals. As you think forward to your future, what ethical issues might occur within career settings that involve working with older adults? How might you go about resolving these issues? Where would you turn when answers to these questions are not immediately clear?

Students should be advised that the committee will likely ask other questions not included in this memo.

All documents must be submitted to Pam Evans pevans@ksu.edu at least one week prior to the scheduled oral exam. Please refer any questions about this document to your advisor.

A Rubric for Success:

A "Self-Evaluation" for Readability / Research Quality/ Completeness of Final Research Paper

Following is some guidance for developing your written paper which will be the basis of your oral exam. We recommend that you begin the process early so you have plenty of time to write a summative paper that you can use as part of your professional dossier. Consult with your major advisor to discuss your progress and address your questions.

1. **Start with the Literature:** You will need to complete some initial investigation on the variables associated with your selected topic to determine what resources are available to you. Your focus should not be so broad as to prevent you from conducting an in-depth inquiry, but you should also not be so specific that your pool of available resources is too limited to provide a complete review on the issues.
2. **Develop an initial Outline:** Once you have identified your topic and started the initial literature review, you are to develop an outline for the format of your paper, expand your literature review and document the type of information in your sources.
 - a. Provide a thesis statement (for assistance with this you are advised to see the OWL <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/658/01/>), and a brief summary of the literature you've identified on your topic. The goal of this process is to lead toward the discovery of "new" knowledge or ways of thinking about a topic, **not just report on** what is already known through the literature.
3. **Development of the 1st Draft:** After you have an outline, you will need to complete your research/ inquiry activities and develop a preliminary draft of your paper. Treat the first draft as if it had to be your final, but, bring it to your major professor one month prior to your submission deadline. The preliminary draft of your paper will be marked up, and returned to you at least 2 weeks prior to the final deadline.
4. **Development of the Final Paper:** After you receive your draft review and evaluation, you should meet with your advisor to go over corrections, additions and clarifications to your paper.
5. **Write your career goals:** Now that you've completed a substantive paper on a topic related to a gerontological issue – reflect on all that you've learned through out the program and where you plan on going from here. There are no "right or wrong" answers, just what you are planning on doing with your education and your career.
6. **Prepare for your Oral Defense:** You will need to provide an oral summation of your investigation and proposed research to your exam committee. You may do this in a variety of ways, but you are encouraged to NOT read your paper to the committee – we will have read the paper.

It is important that you have organized your thoughts ahead of time so you can guide us to the areas of your work that you feel are the most critical to your topic. Students have done this successfully with and without additional visuals (such as Power Point, Prezi, Websites, etc.) Think about how you can most clearly summarize and convey the depth and breadth of your work, highlight key findings from the paper, and demonstrates your ability to communicate on a professional level.

An evaluative "rubric" organized by the typical sections of a research paper of this nature is provided for you. Use this as a guide to **self-evaluate** how you are attending to the basic requirements of the paper.

A Rubric for Success:

A "Self-Evaluation" for Readability / Research Quality/ Completeness of Final Research Paper

Introduction

[Excellent] Author provides a clear statement of the problem or issue; explains why the problem is important (justification is clear); and places the problem in an appropriate context.

[Very Good/Above Average] Author clearly identifies the focus of the paper, but a specific problem is less fully articulated; identifies that the problem as relevance; context of the problem is acknowledged but may not be fully articulated.

[Good/ Average] Problem or focus is loosely defined; significance of the problem not clearly articulated; context of the problem is unclear.

[Below Average] Problem is acknowledged but not clearly articulated and/or focus is too broad to be covered in sufficient depth; does not put a problem in context or identify how there is relevance.

Literature Review*

[Excellent] References and Annotated Bibliography represent a comprehensive approach to identifying and skillful use of high-quality, credible, and relevant sources; writing synthesizes the literature in a manner that displays an understanding of the history and context of the problem of focus; uses literature to support framework, methods, and argument; more than 20 sources are cited in the paper.

[Very Good/ Above Average] References and Annotated Bibliography show an understanding of the most relevant literature and author selects sources for final paper wisely; provides a thoughtful and accurate critique of the selected sources; uses literature as a basis for research question; more than 15 sources are cited in the paper.

[Good/ Average] Provides an adequate coverage of the literature and demonstrates an understanding of content but may miss some important works; does not clearly tie literature to framework or paper's focus; at least 12 sources are cited in the paper.

[Below Average] Inadequate coverage of literature or misinterprets literature; cite sources that lack applicability to the current understanding of the context or issue; or less than 12 sources are cited in the paper.

Theory / Framework

[Excellent] Theory aligns with research question; framework is well conceived and logically consistent.

[Very Good/Above Average] Uses theory and an existing framework appropriately; theory & framework informs and supports the research question and proposed methods.

[Good/ Average] Demonstrates an understanding of theory or existing framework but may not articulate or critically analyze the theory's underlying assumptions.

[Below Average] Existing theories are absent, misunderstood or wrong; framework does not align with research question and/ or methods.

Method(s)

[Excellent] Clearly articulated variables to be studied and measured; provides a thorough description; describes why method was chosen but also discusses limitations.

A Rubric for Success:

A "Self-Evaluation" for Readability / Research Quality/ Completeness of Final Research Paper

[Very Good/Above Average] Appropriate for the problem and acknowledges variables to be studied but may lack necessary details or measures; discusses why method was selected, but may not clearly address limitations.

[Good/ Average] Approach for methodology doesn't fully align with problem or focus; shows basic understanding of method but its described with minimal detail.

[Below Average] Lacks a clearly articulated method and or method is not described in sufficient detail. Method doesn't align with problem or focus.

Discussion/ Conclusions

[Excellent] Clearly and concisely summarizes the work and states a conclusion that is a logical extrapolation from the inquiry findings; discusses the strengths and limitations of the paper; raises new questions and discusses future directions.

[Very Good/Above Average] Provides a good summary of the work and ties everything together; states the contribution to the body of knowledge and identifies possible implications and limitations.

[Good/ Average] Briefly summarizes the key points of the paper, but may not acknowledge the significance of the research; does not acknowledge limitations; next steps are not well articulated.

[Below Average] Does not draw clear conclusions or tie things together in a concise manner; makes claims that cannot be verified through literature or proposed methods; does not identify next steps.

Control of Syntax & Mechanics

[Excellent] Uses graceful language that skillfully communicates meaning to readers with clarity and fluency.

[Very Good/Above Average] Uses straightforward language that generally conveys meaning to readers.

[Good/ Average] Uses language that generally conveys meaning to readers with clarity, although writing may include some errors.

[Below Average] Uses language that sometimes impedes meaning because of errors.