

Simpson University  
Master of Arts in Counseling Psychology

## Program Writing Guidelines

These guidelines apply to all assignments that require use of APA style.

## Program Writing Guidelines

The purpose of these guidelines is to assist the student in producing scholarly written work that meets the requirements established by faculty for course assignments. It will also serve to ensure that program writing standards are consistently maintained by faculty throughout all coursework in the program. The guidelines are organized into four main sections.

### **Writing Style and the APA Manual**

The fundamental guide for writing style in the Master of Arts in Counseling Psychology program is the sixth edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*. This publication is often referred to as the “APA Manual,” “APA Sixth,” or simply as the Manual. As noted in the fifth edition of the APA Manual (the version prior to the current one), the primary purpose of the Manual is to provide guidelines for the preparation of manuscripts that will be submitted for publication in journals. However, virtually every graduate and undergraduate program in any area of psychology or behavioral science uses the APA Manual as the standard for papers, manuscripts, theses, lab reports, and so forth. The purpose and form of written work produced for a course differs from those of journal articles submitted for publication. The program writing guidelines described in this document outline the requirements for papers produced by students in the Master of Arts in Counseling Psychology program.

Where there are differences between the APA Manual and these Guidelines, the Guidelines take precedence. There are very few instances where the Guidelines differ from the APA Manual. The student is responsible for being familiar with the standards set forth in the APA Manual, and for ensuring that anyone assisting in editing course work to be submitted in fulfillment of course requirements is following the rules of the Manual and these Guidelines. In

all instances of written work submitted to fulfill the requirements of a course or assignment, the rules and guidelines contained in the APA Manual sixth edition must be closely followed.

The student should carefully proofread her/his work before submitting assignments. The spelling and grammar check features of your word processor can be of help in identifying problems with writing but the student is responsible for double checking the accuracy of all changes suggested. In some cases, an instructor may extend the courtesy of allowing the student to submit one or more drafts of a written project for feedback before submitting the final version of the paper. Feedback may suggest that the student seek additional assistance with mechanics of writing or mastery of a scholarly style of writing. Writing assistance is available to all MACP students through the Academic Success Center on campus where individual tutoring for a period of time or one-time assistance for a specific paper or project is available. Check with the Academic Success Center for their hours of operation and for how to schedule appointments.

### **Deviations from APA Manual**

**Title page.** All work done in APA style must include a cover page. The required elements of the cover page include the running head flush left, page number on the same line flush right. This information is placed within a header on your paper. Space down 10 lines then add the title of the paper centered, double space and type the name of the student centered, double space then type the university affiliation (Simpson University) centered. Space down 20 lines then center the course number and title, double space then type the name of the instructor including title if applicable centered, double space then type the date of submission centered. Please see Appendix A for an illustration of how the cover page should be formatted. Except for the running head, all lines should be typed in upper and lower case and should not be in bold.

**Typeface.** The only typeface allowed for written course assignments that require APA

style is Times New Roman, 12 point font size. All documents must be produced as Microsoft Word documents or be Word compatible.

### **Instructor Discretion**

**Block quotes.** Instructors may chose to allow or disallow students to incorporate block quotes in fulfillment of course writing requirements. If allowed, students are required to follow the guidelines found in the APA Manual on pages 92 and 171 for formatting block quotes and for citing sources. As a general rule, not more than one block quote should be used in a paper of between six and 10 pages in length. Papers that are shorter than six pages should not include block quotes. Lengthier papers may incorporate two or more block quotes, at the discretion of the instructor.

**Secondary sources.** Typically, a very limited number of secondary sources are acceptable in a paper written for graduate courses. Instructors who do not allow secondary sources should notify students of their policy. If secondary sources are used, students should follow the guidelines found on page 178 of the Manual for citing and referencing them.

### **Manuscript Requirements**

Creating papers in a uniform style and format will accomplish a number of things. The appearance of your paper invites the reader to want to find out what you are saying. It allows the reader to engage with the content of the paper without being distracted by clumsy format. It lessens the possibility that the reader or grader will misinterpret or misunderstand what is being written. It assists the writer in organizing information in a logical way. It helps the writer to develop critical thinking skills. Writers need to master only a few basic rules of APA style in order to produce a well formatted, graduate-level paper.

### **Running Head**

All papers that are required to be written in APA style will have a running head. The running head is usually a shortened version of the title of the paper unless the title is fewer than six words. Use the header function in your word processing program to locate the running head at the top left of each page of the paper. On the title page, the words Running Head are used followed by a colon and then the shortened version of the title of the paper typed in all caps. On subsequent pages the words Running Head are left off and the title is in all caps flush with the left margin.

### **Elements of the Paper**

Most papers submitted as course requirements should contain only a few basic elements. They are (a) the title page, (b) the abstract page, (c) the body of the paper, and (d) the reference page(s). In some circumstances the paper may include appendices. The title page requirements have been described above.

#### **Abstract**

Papers of more than five pages in length must include an abstract. Creating the abstract will assist the writer in developing a concise, succinct statement that describes what the paper is about. The abstract is written after you have completed writing the paper. A description of the abstract and rules for formatting are found on pages 25-27 in the Manual. Keep in mind that the *APA Publication Manual* is just that – a manual that instructs people how to create reports of their research to submit for consideration of publication, typically to peer reviewed journals in specific disciplines. Papers that students in the MACP program will be writing have a different purpose. That purpose is to synthesize information you have gathered from reading research literature on a particular topic or subject and to report on it. Thus, students will need to adapt some of the specific rule statements found in the Manual so that they make sense for the type of

paper they are writing. Whatever the purpose of the paper, the abstract should meet the requirements found on page 26 of the Manual as being accurate, nonevaluative, coherent and readable, and concise. An abstract for a paper of the length typically required in most courses (six to 15 pages) should be no more than 200 words and less is better.

### **Body of the Paper**

**Margins.** Margins are required to be set at one inch on all sides, left, right, top and bottom.

**Line spacing.** All text in the body of the paper and in the reference page must be double spaced. This includes double spacing after all levels of heading.

**Alignment.** Papers should be aligned flush left on the page. The right margin should be uneven, or *ragged*. Once margins are set at one inch all around with flush left style, allow the word processor to place the words in a sentence. Do not hyphenate or break up words at the end of lines.

**Paragraphs.** Indent every new paragraph five spaces. The only exception is block quotes. See Instructor Discretion above for information about using block quotes.

**Page numbers.** Begin pagination with the title page being page number one. Page numbers should be located at the top right on the same line as the running head.

**Headings.** Headings are used to help the writer organize the information being presented, but they also serve to help the reader quickly see the main ideas contained in the paper and the relative importance of those ideas. Papers of the length and purpose typically assigned in the Master of Arts in Counseling Psychology program should not require more than four levels of heading and many will require three or, in some cases, only two. All papers should contain a

minimum of two levels of heading. If four levels of heading are used, they should be placed as illustrated below.

**Centered, Boldface, Uppercase, and Lowercase Heading (Level 1)**

**Flush Left, Boldface, Uppercase, and Lowercase (Level 2)**

**Indented, boldface, lowercase paragraph heading ending with a period.** Text follows immediately. (Level 3)

***Indented, boldface, italicized, lowercase ending with a period.*** Text follows immediately. (Level 4)

Regardless of the number of heading levels being used, the placement follows this same top-down progression. So, for example, if you are using three levels of heading, drop Level 4. If you are using two levels of heading, drop Levels 4 and 3. Headings are always used in the order prescribed. For example, you may not place a Level 3 heading immediately below a Level 1 heading. Please see pages 62-63 in the Manual for further information on the use and placement of headings. Also, pay close attention to how headings are used in the journal articles that you read and note that articles published before 2010 will likely be formatted using an older edition of the Manual.

**Introduction.** Papers will not have an introduction section that is labeled as such. It is assumed that the first part of your paper that falls immediately after the title is the introduction.

**Reference Page**

References will be listed beginning on a separate page that comes after the conclusion of the body of your paper. The word reference should appear in a Level 1 heading. Only references cited in the body of the paper will appear on the reference page. Students should be

sure that all authors or sources cited in the body of the paper appear on the reference page and that all references appearing on the reference page are properly cited in the body of the paper.

References in the reference list should begin with the first line flush left and any additional lines in a single reference indented with a hanging indent of five spaces from the left margin. In MS Word® 1997-2003: format/paragraph/special/hanging. In MS Word® 2007 Home tab/paragraph/special/hanging.

Students should become very familiar with the information contained on pages 174-224 in the sixth edition of the APA Manual. Peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and some electronic sources will be the primary sources of information for papers written in the graduate program. Students should master the basic rules for citing and then referencing from these primary sources. When in doubt about how to cite or reference a source, students should consult the APA Manual.

### **Citations**

Citations are used as a way to ensure that credit is properly given to those who have provided material for the paper in any form whatsoever. So, whether you are using material or information that you got through having a personal conversation with someone or whether you are using material you have gathered from the internet, from published research, or any other source, you are required to give proper credit. This includes giving credit for ideas as well as actual data or information. The cardinal rule is that a writer does not present the work of another person as if it were his or her own work. Given the vast amount of information available through multi-media sources, you may not know the source of an idea, but if you do know or can reasonably find out, you are required to give proper credit.



Students should become thoroughly familiar with the information contained in pages 169-182 of the Manual related to properly citing sources.

### **Submitting Completed Papers**

Papers that are turned in to be graded should be organized in the proper order and stapled in the upper left corner. Papers should not be submitted in presentation folders. Pages should be ordered as:

Title page

Abstract page

Body of paper

Reference page(s)

The program rubric will be used by instructors to evaluate papers. Instructors are required to turn graded papers in to the program administration along with the completed rubric before they are returned to students. Papers written during the program become the property of the Program. Representative samples of written work will be copied and kept for the purpose of course evaluation and institutional assessment. Any information that identifies the student will be removed from papers before they are used for these purposes.

### **Electronic Submission**

In some cases, instructors may require that students submit papers in an electronic format rather than in hard copy. All instructors have been provided with an account to Turnitin.com which is a service that evaluates student's written work against several billion published and unpublished works. The service evaluates for evidence of plagiarism.

### **Other Resources**

Although the *APA Publication Manual* is the final authority for writing guidelines for papers in the Master of Arts in Counseling Psychology program, students are able to access some resources online that may help to deconstruct the complexity of the Manual. Two of those resources are listed below.

The American Psychological Association website has an excellent link that can be found at <http://www.apastyle.org/>. Go to Most Popular on the right hand side of the page.

Purdue University OWL (online writing lab) is also a good resource for students. You can find it at <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/13/>.

Master of Arts in Counseling Psychology Program Writing Guidelines

Student's First and Last Names

Simpson University

CPXXXX Introduction to Writing

Dr. Joe Smith

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