



College of Agricultural Sciences

Master of Agriculture  
Agricultural Extension Education

## *Professional Paper Guidelines*

The purpose of the professional paper is to demonstrate the student's knowledge of an issue, topic or discipline related to Cooperative Extension and to present a paper which will provide the profession with relevant information. The paper may be a review and establish a position on existing research and information or may involve collection of data that is analyzed and a conclusion drawn. The paper will contain three chapters, in most cases, and will follow the guidelines presented here. The following is a step-by-step procedure recommended for completion of the professional paper.

### Issue Selection

- Review current journals and research to begin to determine your interests and where needs exist. It is also recommended that you visit with state extension specialists regarding topics or issues that may interest you.
- Be alert to topics of interest in class discussions and at professional meetings.
- Consider problems you would like to address or solve in your development of the professional paper.
- Keep the scope of the problem reasonable for the limitations of time, finances and ability of the author.
- Select a topic for which you have a passion or it will become a burden by the time you complete the paper.

### Issue Approval

- When you have selected an idea or issue and thought the process through, make an appointment with your advisor and discuss it with him/her.
- After you have refined the idea into a proposal, meet with your advisor (or committee) and get input and agreement.

### Approval to Conduct Human Research

- Under the guidelines established by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and in order to protect the University's privilege to do research, approval of an Institutional Human Subjects Research Committee is required for projects involving research in which human beings are the subjects, regardless of the source of funding.
- Students conducting research with human subjects as a part of their degree requirements must receive committee approval prior to conducting the actual research. Forms for submitting the proposed research to the Human Subjects Research Committee are available on the University Web Page (<http://www.research.colostate.edu/regulatory>).

- A copy of the approved research proposal must be included with the application for approval. Your adviser is listed as the principal investigator since the principal investigator must be a faculty member.
- The Administrator for the Human Subjects Research Committee (HSRC) is Celia Walker, who is located in the University Services Center. Committee meetings are held on the third Thursday of each month. **THE DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION IS AT NOON ON THE SECOND THURSDAY OF THE MONTH.** You need to allow seven to ten business days after the date of the meeting for a response. Also, budget time on your timeline for making adjustments to your proposal, and resubmission at another Human Subjects Research Committee meeting. This timeline may change so be checking with Celia Walker for up-to-date details.

### Study Your Issue

- Research and read information available electronically and in print on the topic.
- Keep reference note cards or photocopy key articles and keep them in a folder for reference.

### Approval of the Outline

- Make an outline of the paper. Submit it to your advisor for input and approval.
- The outline must be typed and include the following:
  - Chapter I—Statement of the problem
    - Stated objectives
    - What is the issue or topic?
    - Why is this a relevant concern?
    - How will you address the concern? What methods will be used?
  - Chapter II—Review of Literature
    - List the topics being addressed in the literature.
    - Organize the topics logically and/or sequentially.
  - Chapter III—Findings, Conclusions, Recommendations, Summary
    - This should include a description of how you will organize this chapter and what you intend to include.

### Preparation of the Professional Paper

- You have prepared an outline of the paper in the previous step. This step is completion of the work as outlined.
- Write Chapter I—Statement of the Problem
  - This should include a clear and concise statement of the problem or issue.
  - The objectives of the study should be written so the reader understands what you intend to do in the first page of the chapter.
  - Elaborate on the issue and why it is important.
  - Describe in detail the methods you will use for gathering information or data, analysis techniques, and research methods, if appropriate.
- Write Chapter II—Review of Literature
  - Provide an explanation of your literature search.
  - This chapter should cite specific literature concerning each of the topics in your outline.

- You are to include all relevant literature whether it agrees with your position or not.
- This is not the chapter for your opinions.
- Good writers synthesize rather than follow one direct quote with another.
- You may choose the style you wish to use but it must be consistent. Most students use the American Psychological Association (APA) style.
- Write Chapter III—Findings, Conclusions, Recommendations, Summary
  - In this chapter you will present the findings of your review of literature and study. The findings should be presented in a logical sequence and the use of charts and graphs is often helpful.
  - You may also state your interpretations of the literature and findings in the conclusions portion of the chapter. Support your position.
  - The recommendations section may be directed at participants in the study, clientele, or other students who may wish to conduct studies related to yours. This is an important portion of the paper for those who may wish to use the information.
  - The summary, if included, should be brief and basically summarize the paper and what you learned from the study.

#### Review of the Professional Paper Draft

- Include title page, acknowledgments, table of contents and bibliography.
- Paper must be typed with page numbers.
- Have at least one person read the draft for errors in grammar and spelling. Have a second person read the paper for content.
- Submit the draft with revisions to your advisor for review. Give your advisor at least two weeks for reviewing the paper.
- Meet with the advisor and make final revisions.

#### Prepare the Final Draft

- The paper must be submitted to your advisor and committee members at least two weeks prior to the scheduled orals.

#### Oral Examination

- The student is responsible for establishing the date, time, and place for the oral exam. Contact committee members and your advisor to schedule the time and date. The conference room in Shepardson (114) is a good location for oral exams but needs to be scheduled.
- You should prepare a 15-20 minute presentation to begin the oral exam. The purpose of the presentation is to give you the opportunity to present any information you may think pertinent to the paper.
- The purpose of the oral exam is to defend your paper.
- After the presentation, committee members will ask questions related to your paper and your understanding of the underlying issue(s). You may also be asked questions about other portions of your education program.
- The meeting should last 1-1/2 to 2 hours.
- Remember you are the expert on your paper.

- Bring your GS 24 form to the meeting.