

# **DIVISION OF EPIDEMIOLOGY** **Culminating Project Guidelines**

Academic Year 2008-09

## **RESEARCH PROJECT**

Research projects will be of one of two types: (1) investigation of a research question expressed in traditional hypothesis form, or (2) evaluation of a program, service, intervention, etc.

Potential topics must be discussed with and approved in advance by your advisor and second reader. All students are required to schedule an oral defense, at which they will present the culminating project. The presentation time and location will be advertised in the Division and other faculty, staff and students will be invited to attend. After the presentation the oral defense will be closed to the public and only the student, advisor and second reader will continue the discussion.

The advisor and second reader must receive the document at least two weeks prior to the oral defense. The final document will be due to the advisor and second reader on the date all graduation materials are due in the Graduate School (will vary with each quarter).

### **Abstract/Executive Summary**

An abstract is a brief summary of approximately 250 words. The major components are: Purpose, Methods, Results/Outcomes, Conclusions, and Implications. An executive summary is an expanded version of the abstract and is typically one to two pages in length.

### **Table of Contents**

The table of contents lists all the major topical areas of the document with the corresponding page numbers.

### **Introduction/Purpose**

The introduction should state the rationale for the project. What is the basic research or evaluation question and why is it of interest?

### **Literature Review**

A literature review is a synthesis of what researchers/scholars have written about a topic organized according to a guiding concept. The purpose is not to list as many articles as possible, but rather to demonstrate your ability to recognize relevant information, to synthesize the information and evaluate it according to the guiding concept that you have identified for your project. The literature review

should include relevant epidemiological information about the target population, critiques of methods, and any gaps in the literature that you have identified.

### **Agency Description**

If relevant, describe the agency/organization involved in the project. This should include a graphic presentation of the organizational structure and a discussion of how the project relates to the mission and other programs of the agency.

### **Research/Evaluation Design**

What are the specific questions to be addressed by this research? What design was used to answer the questions? Was that design sufficient? What are the major threats to validity in the design? How might those threats be dealt with in follow-up studies?

### **Methods, Key Variables and Instrumentation**

What methods and procedures were used to collect and analyze data? What were the key variables of interest? How were those variables measured?

### **Human Subjects**

Please note that if human subjects are involved in any way in your research, you will need to have your proposal reviewed and approved by the OSU Institutional Review Board before you begin any data collection or analysis.

### **Results**

The findings should be presented in this section. Describe the results of the data analyses. All tables and figures should be referred to within the text. If a table or a figure is used from another source there needs to be a reference citation. If possible, tables and figures should be placed within the text; larger tables and figures may be included in an appendix.

### **Discussion, Implications, and Recommendations**

Discussion of the findings (interpretation of the data) as they relate to the project questions, goals, and objectives should be presented in this section. Implications of the findings for the agency/organization should be included and how the findings may impact policy. Recommendations for use of the findings and for future research should also be presented in this section.

### **References**

All literature and personal communications cited in the proposal must be listed in the reference section. References should follow a standard citation format.

### **Appendices**

Anything not included in the text of the project report that is important for the understanding of the design, implementation, or conclusions of the project should be attached as an appendix. For example: instruments, consent forms, timeline,

etc. All appendices must have references within the text of the project report and must be included as part of the table of contents.