Graduating Project Proposal Guide

for

Graduate Students

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http://blogs.ubc.ca/educ500/

EDCP Description

The M.Ed. Graduating Project is intended as a culminating project that is of personal use to the student and that is considered educationally valuable by an audience of professional peers.

It *could take the form of:*

- a synthesis or critical analysis of professionally relevant literature;
- an exploration of a curriculum-related problem and a proposal for addressing it;
- an application of theories and concepts to a specific curriculum context;
- a critical analysis of existing policies or programs, culminating in a proposal for
- innovative curriculum or pedagogy;
- a relevant creative project that also has educational application and relevance;
- the production of media to be used in an educational or policy context;
- or some other possibility to be discussed with your supervisor. *(The Department's*

Graduate Advisory Committee will resolve any dispute over what may or may not qualify as a Graduating Project).

Although a written document is the standard format, students, in consultation with their Supervisor, may opt for other formats including educational resource materials, exhibitions, journal and magazine articles, multimedia and oral presentations, performances, videos, etc. that can be shared with an audience of educators. A written summary of non-print material must accompany such a project.

The journey toward the Graduating Project:

1. Register in EDCP 590.
2. As part of the course requirement prepare a proposal (≈1,000 words) in which you describe the purpose of your project, the general approach you will take, the literature or other source material that you will use, and the planned organization of your project. Clearly indicate why the proposed project has professional relevance. Your specialist program-area supervisor will review this proposal. Once it has been approved by your Supervisor, retain copies for your and the Supervisor's files.
3. With your Supervisor's guidance complete the work on your project. With your Supervisor's approval and guidance, submit the project to a second faculty reader / reviewer.
4. All graduating projects must be approved and signed by your Supervisor and this second faculty member. Projects are assessed using criteria that are typical in university graduate programs: e.g., how well the stated purpose is achieved, clarity and organization, depth and quality of analysis, and use of source materials.
5. At the discretion of the student and Supervisor, a public presentation of your project may be arranged. This event does not need to be on campus, but should scheduled for attendance by your Supervisor and second faculty reviewer / reader.
6. Submit a copy to the Department (together with a summary and CD, DVD, etc. if the project is in a media format). A signed 590 form is required.
7. Prepare to graduate, and make use of your project in your own educational setting!

Graduating Project Brief Description:
The Graduating Project is intended as a culminating project that is of personal use to the student and considered educationally valuable by an audience of professional peers. Although a formal written paper may be submitted, we also encourage the production of a variety of educational resource materials, exhibitions, journal and magazine articles, multimedia and oral presentations, performances, videos, etc. that can be shared with an audience of educators. A written document that identifies the need for the project, describes its content, and lists source materials, must accompany all nonprint submissions.

Graduating Project BRIEF Proposal Format

Section	Pages
Working Title	**NA**
1. Introduction: What are your general and more specific interests in what you want to explore across a longitudinal timeline? This reflects a focus on your practice and curriculum (i.e., Teacher Inquiry).	**(1 page)**
2. Inquiry Question(s) or Problem: What is the question (or are the questions) that ground(s) your inquiry?	**(1/4 page or less)**
3. Inquiry Purpose: Why is this important? Who is the potential audience or participants that will likely gain from your inquiry?	**(1/4 – 1/2 page)**
4. Key or Critical Concepts: Identify 2-3 concepts that you intend to explore or focus on in your inquiry. Provide a brief description of these or definitions as related to your interests and inquiry.	**(1/2 - 1 page)**
5. Ethical Considerations: Identify any ethical considerations that may arise in your inquiry or ethical problems that will have to be resolved before or during the inquiry (e.g., parental consent).	**(1/2 - 1 page)**
6. References	**Attach**

Graduating Project Final Format (Example #1) (approx. 50 pages)

Common format for a Graduating Project:

Table of Contents

1. *Introduction*: Provides a brief background of yourself and your interest in this topic
2. *Theory and Context*: Literature review, grounds your inquiry in related work
3. *Inquiry project Description*: Description of your project and rationale (what you did, how you did it, why you did it)
4. *Timeline*: A brief overview of your progress over these two years with regard to your project and your thinking around your project
5. *Critical Concepts*: The key terms you draw on in your project (these may form part of your lit review)
6. *Curriculum*: Ties to curriculum theory and related ideology (your own epistemology, ontology, philosophy, etc. could go here, and/or you could draw on the work done in your curriculum class)
7. *Ethical Considerations*: The ethical issues around your project and how you addressed them
8. *Analysis and Interpretation*: What you learned from your inquiry, related back to the rationale and questions guiding your inquiry, and to the concepts, theory, and context discussed in your lit review
9. *Conclusion*: Relates your inquiry to your practice, considers what comes next

Graduating Project Final Format (Example #2) (approx. 50 pages)

THE PROBLEM AND ITS CONTEXT

1. Introduction to the Research
    a. A short overview of the Context or Background to the Problem
    b. What is the context in which the problem is situated?

2. General Problem
    a. What area of educational research is this study addressing?
    b. Specific Research Questions
    c. Identify the specific research question

3. Methods of the Study
    a. A very brief overview of how you addressed these research questions (Sometimes this information is provided in the General Problem Area section, or other sections)
    b. E.g., Self-Study, Teacher Inquiry, etc.

4. Significance of the Problem
    a. Why is this an important problem for educators to address
    b. How is it situated in the research literature?

5. Limitations of the Study
    a. What are the decisions you made and other factors which limit your ability to make knowledge claims or generalizations about your study?

6. Overview of the Project

7. Outline or timeline briefly the contents of the non-print media if applicable.

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8. The conclusions should be organized around your research questions and should basically be a summary of the findings.

9. Outline some of the implications of the study for the field. Again, this might mean referring back to your literature review or it may take the form of recommendations for improved practice by counselors, librarians, researchers, policy makers, teachers, etc.

10. **Future Directions**: This is a section that could map out further studies that you hope to do upon graduation OR that another graduate student who is just beginning might consult for guidance.

BIBILOGRAPHY
APPENDICES
Include Instruments and any other forms, etc. that were used.

Teacher Inquiry & Research Ethics

1. **Teacher Inquiry**
    a. Inquiry v Research
    b. Definitions and Taxonomies
        i. Teacher Inquiry
            1. Samaras & Roberts (2001, p. 43): Self-study teacher research is designed to encourage teachers to be agents of their own reform initiatives while working collaboratively with school colleagues. It has proven useful to an array of educators coming from multiple disciplines and programs (Kosnik, Beck, Freese, & Samaras 2006). In self-study, teachers critically examine their actions and the context of those actions as a way of developing a more consciously driven mode of professional activity, as contrasted with action based on habit, tradition, or impulse. Self-study allows teachers to plan, enact, and assess their pedagogical strategies with the support and critique of professional colleagues while examining the impact of their efforts on student learning.
            2. Samaras & Roberts (2001, pp. 42-43):
                a. Imagine if teachers were given these prompts:
                    i. What question do I most wonder about in my teaching practice?
                    ii. What causes me to wonder about this question?
                    iii. Why is this question important to me? What experiences and perspectives brought me to ask this question?
                    iv. Who would benefit from addressing this question (e.g. me, my students, my school, a school division, society at large)?
                b. Samaras & Roberts (2001, pp. 43-45) offer the following method:
                    i. STEP 1: Author your own question.
                    ii. STEP 2: Work with a critical friends team.
                    iii. STEP 3: Plan new pedagogies for improved learning.
                    iv. STEP 4: Enact, document, and assess your research process.
                    v. STEP 5: Generate and share what you learned.
        ii. Practitioner Research
            1. Dadds (2004, p. 3): Practitioner research, therefore, is not seeking generalisations in the way some large-scale forms of research attempt to do. Rather, it is seeking new understandings that will enable us to create the most intelligent and informed approach we can to improving our provision for those in our care. Stenhouse claimed that ‘we are concerned with the development of a sensitive and self-critical subjective perspective and not with the aspiration to unattainable objectivity’ (1975:157). In accepting the mantle, as researchers,

of professional communicators in a more public arena, therefore, we seek to share our research stories with others so that colleagues can, if appropriate, engage with them and relate them to their own work. In this sense, the notion of relateability becomes more appropriate for practitioner research than the traditional research concept of generalisability. This is how the influence of the small-scale, particular project, shared across the profession, can work its way into the larger fabric.

iii. Practitioner Action Research
    1. Reason & Bradbury (2001, p. 1): Action research is a participatory, democratic process concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes…It seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally to the flourishing of individual persons and their communities.

iv. Self-Study
    1. Lewison (2003, p. 100): [A self-study is] a generally agreed upon set of insider research practices that promote teachers taking a close, critical look at their teaching and the academic and social development of their students… [A self-study] involves classroom teachers in a cycle of inquiry, reflection, and action. In this cycle, teachers question common practice, approach problems from new perspectives, consider research and evidence to propose new solutions, implement these solutions, and evaluate the results, starting the cycle anew.

v. Appreciative Inquiry
    1. More (2010): Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is a method for discovering, understanding and fostering innovations in organizations through the gathering of positive stories and images and the construction of positive interactions. AI seeks out the very best of "what is" to help ignite the collective imagination of ‘what could be’. The aim is to generate new knowledge which expands the ‘realm of the possible’ and helps members of an organization envision a collectively desired future and to carry forth that vision in ways which successfully translates images of possibility into reality and beliefs into practice.

c. Methodologies
    i. Samaras & Roberts (2010, pp. 43-44):
        1. STEP 1: Author your own question.
        2. STEP 2: Work with a critical friends team.
        3. STEP 3: Plan new pedagogies for improved learning.
        4. STEP 4: Enact, document, and assess your research process.
        5. STEP 5: Generate and share what you learned.

2. **Research Ethics**
    a. Definitions
        i. Tri-Council Policy Statement (TCPS 2) governs formal research ethics across Canada. http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/eng/policy-politique/initiatives/tcps2-eptc2/Default/
            1. The TCPS 2 defines **research** as "a systematic investigation to establish facts, principles or generalizable knowledge" (p. 17). http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/eng/archives/tcps-eptc/section1-chapitre1/#1A
        ii. The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) is the primary federal research policy and funding agency for educational researchers and is bound to the TCPS 2.
            1. SSHRC's "Definitions of Terms" elaborates on **research / creation**: "Any research activity or approach to research that forms an essential part of a creative process or artistic discipline and that directly fosters the creation of literary/artistic works. The research must address clear research questions, offer theoretical contextualization within the relevant field or fields of literary/artistic inquiry, and present a well-considered methodological approach. Both the research and the resulting literary/artistic works must meet peer standards of excellence and be suitable for publication, public performance or viewing."
    b. TCPS 2 (*Tri-Council Policy Statement: Research Ethics*)
        i. The following distinguishes research requiring REB review from non-research activities that have traditionally employed methods and techniques similar to those employed in research. Such activities are not considered "research" as defined in this Policy, and do not require REB review. Activities outside the scope of research subject to REB review (see Articles 2.5 and 2.6), as defined in this Policy, may still raise ethical issues that would benefit from careful consideration by an individual or a body capable of providing some independent guidance, other than an REB. These ethics resources may be based in professional or disciplinary associations, particularly where those associations have established best practices guidelines for such activities in their discipline.
        ii. "Exempt from REB Review"
            1. **Article 2.3** REB review is not required for research involving the observation of people in public places where:
                a. it does not involve any intervention staged by the researcher, or direct interaction with the individuals or groups;
                b. individuals or groups targeted for observation have no reasonable expectation of privacy; and
                c. any dissemination of research results does not allow identification of specific individuals.
            2. **Article 2.4**REB review is not required for research that relies exclusively on secondary use of anonymous information, or

anonymous human biological materials, so long as the process of data linkage or recording or dissemination of results does not generate identifiable information.

3. **Article 2.5** Quality assurance and quality improvement studies, program evaluation activities, and performance reviews, or testing within normal educational requirements when used exclusively for assessment, management or improvement purposes, do not constitute research for the purposes of this Policy, and do not fall within the scope of REB review.
4. **Article 2.6** Creative practice activities, in and of themselves, do not require REB review. However, research that employs creative practice to obtain responses from participants that will be analyzed to answer a research question is subject to REB review.

iii. **In most cases**, self-study and teacher inquiry fall under a category of "Exempt from REB Review" (see above from TCPS 2). One of the revisions from TCPS 1 to TCPS 2 was a close look at the Exemptions as it became clear that many practices, including most of teaching, is self-governed by professional Codes of Ethics (e.g., BCTF). And in most cases what is submitted to Reviews Boards (e.g., UBC BREB) falls under the category of Minimal Risk.

iv. For media productions or Graduating Projects, **in most cases** as you broadcast, present, report, write, etc., you will be paraphrasing your students' comments. Or, in terms of the TCPS 2, directly quoting comments that are "publicly accessible" with "no reasonable expectation of privacy" (e.g., blog comments, etc.). That's fine and well within exemption. However, some of you may deem it necessary to quote written comments your students make in the more private forums created for your innovations (e.g., Moodle).

1. If you prefer not to paraphrase in these cases, it's good practice to request consent.
2. For the GPs, it is not advisable to quote students under 14 years of age. Those able to give Consent under Minimal Risk are 14 years or older. Under 14 requires parental assent.
3. Of course, **all and any names** (students, classes, schools, etc.) should be changed with pseudonyms as you broadcast, present, report, write, etc.

c. Forms

i. Assent Form (Images)
ii. Consent Form (Images)
iii. Consent Form (Extended Participant Quotation)

References

1. British Columbia Teachers' Federation (2008). *Teacher Inquiry in the BCTF: A focus for supporting teachers' professional development*. Vancouver, BC: BCTF.
2. Hammond, S. A. (1996). *The thin book of appreciative inquiry*. Plano, TX: CSS.
3. Samaras, A.P. & Roberts, L. (2011). Flying solo: Teachers take charge of their learning through self-study research. *Learning Forward, 22*(5), 42-45.

Stating a Thesis

Stephen Petrina
8 January 2008

Although it's not always necessary or desirable to state a thesis and defend it, this convention for writing is prevalent and generally expected in academia. A good argument is *de rigueur* in academia. It is quite common to hear the professor reiterate "what is the thesis?" or the editor impress on the author the "need to state an argument."

Hence, it is crucial that graduate students can confidently write with this convention of stating and defending theses (claim, premise & warrant, argument, etc.). Quite often, student receive a pattern of comments or margin notes from professors: 'Thesis too vague… paper unwieldy;' 'Thesis too narrow or factual… cannot be developed into a full essay;' 'Did not take a stance… observations are stated instead of assertions.'

The purpose of stating a thesis or argument is to provide dialogue (inspire, raise questions, provoke thoughts, etc.) over an idea, issue, data, knowledge, information, etc. that can be demonstrated to be the case, "hold water," be true, considerable, persuasive, understandable, etc. The challenge is to *state and demonstrate* a thesis (i.e., provide evidence for the thesis stated). In this way, all theses are debatable and discursive; a thesis is an assertion or stand on a topic. It is an arguable position, not an observation The thesis anchors the essay and provides its direction by asserting a controlling idea. It keeps the content of the essay focused.

In academia, this convention typically implies entering an ongoing (current, timely, historical, etc.) conversation within a discipline, across disciplines, between or among authors, etc. This gives the thesis currency but also means that students have to be finely tuned into the discourse and arguments within disciplines, and clear about who is saying what, and where they said it. Of course, this places a burden on the student of interdisciplinarity to engage with numerous and various discourses and sources. But this interdisciplinarity can be powerful for demonstrating contradictions and shortcomings of ongoing arguments.

This convention is not merely limited to academia. Journalists, for example, commonly draw from, or begin with a clear thesis. Witness Anna Maria Tremonti introducing a program on her show, The Current, on the morning of 8 January 2008:

> Today Mr. Arar is a household name. The ordeals of Abdullah Almalki and Ahmad El Maati have been well documented, including on this program. Mr. Nureddin's case, however, has never generated the same kind of heat. Perhaps it's because his time in a Middle Eastern prison can be measured in weeks rather than months or years. Or perhaps it's because of his reluctance to speak publicly for fear of destroying the life he's trying to rebuild.

Notice how she states the thesis in conversation with the literature and other journalists. "Arar is a household name… ordeals of Abdullah Almalki and Ahmad El Maati have been well documented…"— She sums up the literature review, so to speak. Then she states the thesis: "Mr. Nureddin's case, however, has never generated the same kind of

heat. Perhaps it's because his time in a Middle Eastern prison can be measured in weeks rather than months or years. Or perhaps it's because of his reluctance to speak publicly"

Stating and demonstrating a thesis does not imply a defensive or argumentative style. Some defenses of theses truly are arguments and some defenders truly are defensive. However, the vast majority of academic arguments are focused engagements with discourses and ongoing conversations, and range from deadly serious to entirely playful.

Argument Tips

Argument by Symmetry

1. If we are entertaining something called the learning sciences, I will argue here that we have to necessarily entertain what I'll call "the learning arts."

Argument by Extension or Implication

1. If web 2.0 transforms the everyday reader into an everyday writer, then by extension the author must be dead. The reader may not have killed the author, as Bathes implies, but…

Argument by Contra-distinction

1. While Voithofer argues that new media research emerges from the principles of new media (i.e., Manovich, 2001), I argue that new media based research has much less to do with new media than with the rhetorical and spiritual power of the new medium. By new medium I refer to…

2. Contrary to Everett who proposes…, I argue that…

Argument by Corrective

1. Although Hayles attends to the nuances of code representing or embodying the unconscious, my point here is that she fails to distinguish programming code from machine code and thereby overlooks an already fragmented unconscious. The implications are that…
2. I wish to throw into sharp relief Stone's association of the body and embodiment with feminism in order to effectively distinguish liberal from material feminisms in cyberspace.

Argument Traps

1. **Tautological Argument**- Argument based on circular logic
   e.g., Teachers should use technology because the net generation uses technology
2. **Axiomatic Argument**- Argument of or for the obvious (often criticized as trivial, superficial, inconsequential or irrelevant)
   e.g., New media can make a difference in how we learn
3. **Inflationary Argument**- Argument drawn from or generating a 'tempest in a teacup.'
   e.g., There is a crisis in policies protecting teachers from student gossip and defamation posts in online forums, such as FaceBook.
4. **Idiosyncratic or Solipsistic Argument**- Argument that is self-centered, self-serving, or overly myopic

e.g., My students made great progress when I used Moodle

5. ***Prima facie* Argument**- Argument that mistakes surface for depth
   e.g., Young students are digital natives requiring different teaching approaches
6. ***Ad hominem* Argument-** Argument that makes personal attacks
   e.g., N.A. Publication has no credibility here and is otherwise a greedy bureaucrat
7. ***Ad nauseum* Argument-** Argument that unnecessarily extends or prolongs an argument
   e.g., Cognition is a function of the brain.
8. **Redundant Argument**- Argument that has already been made
   e.g., Communities of practice are, by nature, both centralized and decentralized
9. **Red Herring or Straw Man Argument**- Argument that misrepresents, misconstrues or distorts a position for rhetorical advantage
   e.g., Hutchins argues that the brain has no role in cognition

Guides

The *Craft of Research* organizes the convention of stating arguments as follows:

7 Making Good Arguments: An Overview 114
7.1 Argument and Conversation 114
7.2 Basing Claims on Reasons 116
7.3 Basing Reasons on Evidence 117
7.4 Acknowledging and Responding to Alternatives 118
7.5 Warranting the Relevance of Reasons 119
7.6 Building Complex Arguments Out of Simple Ones 121
7.7 Arguments and Your Ethos 122
Quick Tip: Designing Arguments Not for Yourself but for Your Readers: Two Common Pitfalls 124

See also:
http://www.logicalfallacies.info/
http://www9.georgetown.edu/faculty/kingch/How_to_Think.htm
http://www.fallacyfiles.org/index.html

Assembling Theoretical Frameworks

(for elaboration, see *Writing Guide for Graduate Students*)

1. Theoretical frameworks will always be dependent on the clarity of the thesis— that is, on how well an author articulates an argument or thesis (For directions on stating a thesis, see the *Writing Guide for Graduate Students*). First articulate a thesis, which will shape and be shaped by theory— a theoretical framework will follow in coversation with the thesis.

2. Widely explore theories that seemingly emerge from and resonate with your topic, problem, or data— you want your data to speak to, suggest and give rise to your theory. For example, a research topic or problem focusing on teenage girls could suggest gender theory, media theory and the body, or theories of ennui or liberty (i.e., desire for autonomy and independence). However, there will also be times when you may want to work from a theory (e.g., psychoanalysis) toward generating a topic, problem, or data, etc. (Alert: aim for theory grounded in a topic or data and not grounded theory).

3. Once you have identified theories that are emergent from and appropriate to your topic and data, begin by assembling and articulating the various authors and ideas into a brief (300-400 words or so) summary. Write in conversation with theorists and your thesis. Write to frame the topic or problem— the thesis will focus and the theoretical framework will frame the topic or problem.

4. In this summary of the framework, take the opportunity to clarify theories and concepts. Also write to orient the framework toward the topic or data. Like the thesis, the theoretical framework frames the reader for understanding or making meaning. Think through a rewrite to frame and orient the reader.

5. If writing a scholarly essay, after you have assembled a summary of the theoretical framework, proceed to write iteratively to thread and weave the framework throughout the essay. If conducting research, after you have assembled a summary of the theoretical framework, proceed to write iteratively to thread, weave, and account for the framework throughout the essay. The emphasis in both cases is on framing for meaning-making.

References

Camp, W. C. (2001). Formulating and evaluating theoretical frameworks for career and technical education research. *Journal of Vocational Education Research, 26*(1), 4-25.

Goffman, E. (1974). *Frame analysis: An essay on the organization of experience*. London: Harper and Row.

Paulston, R. (Ed.) (1996). *Social cartography: Mapping ways of seeing social and educational change*. New York: Garland.

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Petrina, S. (2008a). *The principles of research (as rhetoric)*. Unpublished manuscript.

Reese, S. D., Gandy, O. & Grant, A. E. (2001). *Framing public life: Perspectives on media and our understanding of the social world*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Reviewing Literature

1. Overview/ Introduction of subject, theories and issues involved.
    - Type of literature review (theory, methodology, policy, quantitative research, qualitative research)
    - Scope- what type of resources are best
    - Search for information: wide enough and narrow enough
2. Categories selected as natural divides of thesis and reviewed material:
    - Organize material around the research question or thesis
    - Include areas of controversy
3. Analysis and interpretation of overarching similarities and variances of ideas: Include
    - Provenance: credentials, evidence
    - Objectivity: authors point of view and representation of other views
    - Persuasiveness: which theses are most convincing vs least?
    - Value: Does this work contribute in a significant way to understanding the subject.
4. Summation or conclusions of thesis generating idea in context with materials reviewed.
    - What is known and not known
    - Areas of further research
    - Relevant, appropriate and, useful

Literature Review Matrix

Question (author's view)	**Article Information**	**Analysis** (strengths & weaknesses)
Formulation of problem/issue		
Clearly defined: Scope, severity, relevance		
Would another perspective be more effective?		
Researcher's orientation: interpretive, critical science, both?		
Author's theoretical framework (psychological, developmental, feminist?) what voice?		
Relationship between theoretical and research perspective		
Relevant and representative literature (inclusive) used?		
If research, how well was it done (measurements, analysis, validity)		
"Popular readership", language use, emotional, rhetorically toned, or reasoning		
Structure clear? Deconstruction possible? Cause-effect		

*Matrix 1 adapted by Linda A. Cannon

Category	Criterion	1	2	3	4
Coverage	Justified criteria for inclusion and exclusion from review	Did not discuss the criteria inclusion or exclusion	Discussed the literature included and excluded	Justified inclusion and exclusion of literature	
Synthesis	Distinguished what has been done in the field what needs to be done	Did not distinguish what has and has not been done	Discussed what has and has not been done	Critically examined the state of the field	
	Placed the topic or problem in the broader scholarly literature	Topic not placed in broader scholarly literature	Some discussion of broader scholarly literature	Topic clearly situated in broader scholarly literature	
	Place the research in the historical context of the field	History of topic not discussed	Some mention of history of topic	Critically examined history of topic	
	Acquired and enhanced the subject vocabulary	Key vocabulary not discussed	Key vocabulary defined	Discussed and resolved ambiguities in definition	
	Articulated important variables and phenomena relevant to the topic	Accepted literature at face value	Some critiques of literature	Offered new perspective	
Methodology	Identified the main methodologies and research techniques that have been used in the field, and their advantages and disadvantages	Research methods not discussed	Some discussion of research methods used to produce claims	Critiqued research methods	Introduced new methods to address problems with predominant methods
	Related ideas and theories in the field to research methodologies	Research methods not discussed	Some discussion of appropriateness of research methods to warrant claims	Critiqued appropriateness of research methods to warrant claims	
Significance	Rationalized the practical significance of the research problem	Practical significance of research not discussed	Practical significance of research discussed	Critiqued practical significance of research	
	Rationalized the scholarly significance of the research problem	Scholarly significance of research not discussed	Scholarly significance of research discussed	Critiqued scholarly significance of research	
Rhetoric	Was written with a coherent, clear structure that supported the review	Poorly conceptualized, haphazard	Some coherent structure	Well developed, coherent	

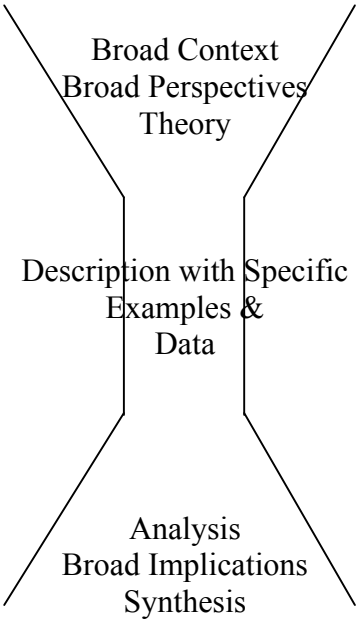
Boote, D.N. and Beile, P (2005). Scholars before researcher: On the centrality of the dissertation literature review in research preparation, *Educational Researcher, 34* (6). pp. 3-15.

Approaches to Writing

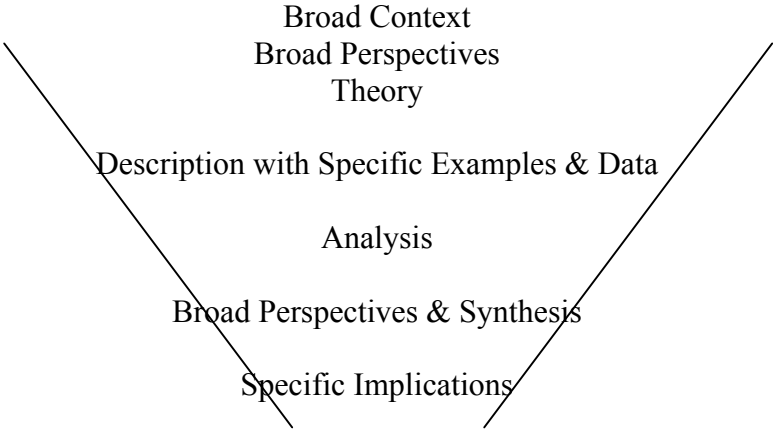
Stephen Petrina

There are a variety of general approaches to writing, including the hourglass, funnel and inverted funnel approaches. Generally, it is important to introduce a topic, describe, analyze and synthesize. Depending on the methodology, it may also be important to deconstruct. In cultural studies, writing (and research) often involves tracking, mapping and framing. Hence, one might track (describe) trends or discourses, map interrelationships among (analyze) trends or discourses, and frame (deconstruct or synthesize) the trends or discourses.

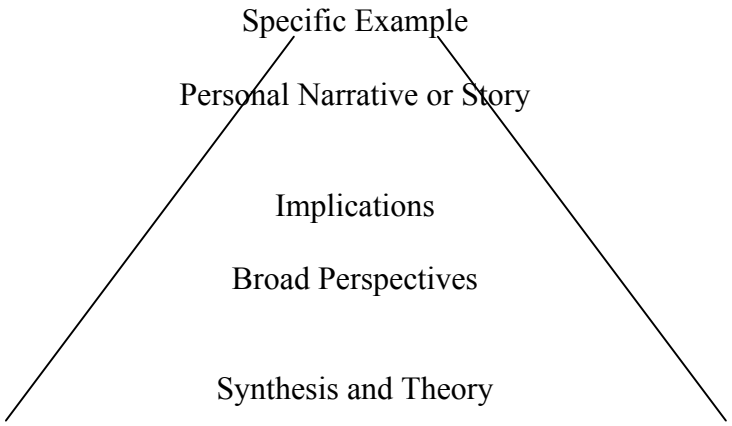
1. Hourglass



2. Funnel



3. Inverted Funnel



Writing Process

1. **Organization**
    a. Chronological Organization
    b. Conceptual Organization
    c. Practical Organization

2. Description
    a. What did the author(s) and texts actually say?
    b. What did they not say?

3. Analysis
    a. How do the authors and texts compare? Contrast?
    b. What is beneath what they say? What are they *really* saying?

4. Deconstruction
    a. What are the binary oppositions in the texts?
    b. How can these oppositions be deconstructed?

5. Synthesis and Explanation
    a. How do the authors and texts fit together?
    b. What underwrites what these authors and texts are saying?
    c. Can new directions be created from the totality of authors and texts reviewed?
    d. How does my work or narrative relate to this?

Writing Tips

- **Active Language:** *Always* use active (as opposed to passive) language. This is helpfully presented in Diana Hacker's A Pocket Style Manual. In fact, this is the best guide for writing:

Hacker, D. (2004). *A pocket style manual* (fourth ed.). Boston: St. Martin's Press.

- **Action verbs:** Use active verbs to give voice to authors. APA style suggests that verbs be in past tense for writing reviews of literature, research reports, etc. MLA style advises authors to use the present tense in writing. The key is to be consistent!

  APA Style Manual, 5th ed. suggests the use of past verb tense for reviews of literature. Use past for data and findings. And use present for conclusions, etc to draw the reader into the discussion (see p. 41 and section 2.02).

  APA also states that present perfect tense is suitable for a literature review, although it suggests past tense be used. "MLA disagrees with the concept of citing any written material in past tense on these simple grounds: the cited text exists here and now, regardless of when it was written or when it is read. This is fundamentally what distinguishes publication from oration. It is the essence of written text: technologies for writing give rise to the concept of the "living" word. I, along with others from my foundational discipline (the humanities), disagree with any notion that what exists in manuscript, print or digital artifact should be spoken of in the past" (Teresa Dobson, email correspondence, 2005).

- The following list will help provide variety in giving voice to authors:
  a. acknowledged
  b. according to
  c. agreed with
  d. argued
  e. asserted
  f. cautioned
  g. compared
  h. concluded
  i. contended
  j. continued
  k. concurred with
  l. determined
  m. entertained
  n. identified
  o. illustrated
  p. issued
  q. indicated
  r. inferred
  s. insisted listed
  t. located
  u. maintained
  v. manipulated
  w. obtained
  x. proposed postulated
  y. reasoned
  z. reported
  aa. said
  bb. stated
  cc. stipulated
  dd. suggested
  ee. supported
  ff. wrote