

APPROVED 9/18/2011

GUIDE TO STUDENT ACADEMIC WRITING

RESEARCH PAPER/TERM PAPER

What is it? The Research paper is the final product of an involved process of research, critical thinking, source evaluation, organization and composition. Interaction with primary and secondary sources is at the heart of a research paper. The goal of a research paper is not to inform the reader what others have to say about a topic, but to draw on what others have to say about a topic and engage the sources in order to offer a reasoned perspective on the issue at hand.

“A research paper is more than the sum of your sources, more than a collection of different pieces of information about a topic, and more than a review of the literature in a field. A research paper analyzes a perspective or argues a point.” (esc.edu)

Work on the research/term paper requires several stages: Select a topic of interest, research and read, create a thesis statement, present the argument or support your claims, complete the research, submit a first draft, present the final draft.

Evaluative Criteria: The evaluation of the paper will be based on the following criteria:

Thesis: The thesis statement is identifiable, plausible, insightful, clear, arguable (not obvious, subjective or a statement of fact).

Argumentation/Analysis: The argumentation possesses clarity, logic and coherence; displays critical thinking and avoids simple description; diffuses counter arguments.

Content/Sources: The content has depth, engages (critiques) the issues, recognizes the presuppositions, and is relevant to the course. The amount and kind of sources reflects the perspectives found in the theological community.

Organization/Structure: The paper is well organized. Clear, appropriate paragraphs; has strong topic sentences and transitions.

Mechanics: Spelling, grammar, punctuation and citation style are correct. Papers should be typed, double spaced, with one inch margins top and bottom, left and right sides, 12 point type and Times New Roman font. Follow the Turabian style for bibliography and foot/endnotes or reference list and parenthetical references. Kate Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, latest edition, is the established guide for form.

Consult Catalogue 2010-2012 pp. 28-30 regarding Academic Standards and Academic Integrity (plagiarism).

EXPOSITORY ESSAY/REFLECTIVE ESSAY

What is it? An essay requires that the student provides his/her own opinions as well as information about a topic. It reflects personal learning stretch, e.g. shows depth of knowledge and learning; may reveal feelings and thoughts; discusses how the insights gained from the study effect your ministry.

Evaluative Criteria:

1. Topic: An experience, occasion, topic, book report: Description shows understanding of the depth and complexity of the topic/experience.
2. Analysis: Articulates the issues with clarity and consistency; Identifies the main or significant points; Distinguishes between level of importance of ideas; Looks at more than one angle by comparing and contrasting; Provides good documentation for the analysis.
3. Reflection: Explores, judges; understands the core of the argument; draws effective conclusion
4. Coherence & Style: Paragraphs follow natural progression of ideas, precise language
5. Mechanics: Sentence structure is correct, e.g. grammar, spelling, punctuation

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION ON MINISTRY

What is it? Contextual theology, i.e. learning from experience- A hermeneutical circle (movement) from experience through the sources of Christian tradition to action, or practical implications for improving one's ministry.

Evaluative Criteria:

1. The experience – Select an event that is meaningful and describe it using concrete facts: tell the story, reveal emotions, include the political, social, cultural, economic, and gender dimensions that apply (Who, what, where, when, how)
2. God's presence – Discover God's presence by being attentive to clues provided by the experience e.g. persons, situation, place, images, objects, gestures, etc.(entering in)
3. Faith tradition – Illustrate a new understanding/interpretation or application of the faith tradition from the experience, i.e. Let the ministry teach. (connecting)
4. Integration – Put the learning into life and ministry (knowledge, being, doing)
5. Mechanics – Follow the format provided for TR: 1. Event or encounter with a person; 2. Social and cultural context; 3. Reflect theologically and prayerfully; 4. Integration/action/new learning. Be attentive to correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling.

PASTORAL PROJECT

What is it? A presentation of applied knowledge and skills to a specific pastoral setting. Some examples of a pastoral projects are a liturgical binder, outline for a teaching event, homily, personal plan for ongoing formation, case study, pastoral research, etc

Evaluative Criteria;

1. Purpose – The goal of the project is clearly articulated and demonstrated.
2. Content - The content selected is appropriate, audience friendly, complete
3. Interest/Creativity – demonstrates an interesting/creative approach to the content
4. Resources – The number and kind of resources use should reflect the perspectives found in the theological community.
5. Organization-The material is well organized; there is a natural flow and good transitions
6. Mechanics- Grammar, punctuation is correct; Spelling has been checked.

HOMILETICS/EVALUATIONS FROM CONGREGATION (faculty, students, parish)

What is it: Aggregate of the subjective assessment by professionals in the field

Evaluative Criteria:

1. Audience - attention to the composition of the intended audience/congregation,
2. Exegesis - good/correct use of the biblical text,
3. Pastoral application - critical/creative application to the pastoral situation
4. Resources – Sufficient number and type of resources used.
5. Mechanics – Accepted communication; Language usage and style.

INTEGRATING SEMINAR

What is it? Personal integration and theological reflection aimed at “seeing things whole.” Group interaction; Exit requirement for all students enrolled in professional degree programs.

Evaluative Criteria:

1. Self reflection –self insight (ability to identify ones strengths)
2. Depth of understanding of priesthood (ministry) – theological and pastoral
3. Integration of theology in the pastoral ministry setting – knowledge, being, doing
4. Continuing education- attention to the four pillars of ongoing formation
5. Mechanics – attentive to correct grammar, punctuation and spelling