

Final Project – Research Paper

The research paper focuses upon scholarly applied or basic research that investigates, examines, or addresses urban topics, issues, or problems. Students should conduct independent research, utilize critical thinking, and apply knowledge and skills gained in Urban Affairs to answer specific research questions in this paper. The research design can be qualitative or quantitative. We encourage students to engage relevant faculty in advisement and consultants on the development of research projects. Researching and writing the Final Project generally takes at least **one semester**.

URBST 791: Approximately once a year, a faculty member will offer a special intensive seminar for students to complete their **Final Projects as research papers or policy reports**. Students will learn to research, organize, and write an original research or policy paper on a subject of their choice. This research or policy paper can be used to fulfill the Final Project required for graduation.

Project Advisement

- Students should consult with the Graduate Advisor on Final Project guidance.
- Alternatively, the student may find an Urban Studies faculty advisor who agrees to provide guidance in developing and writing the research paper.
- **Note:** You must have a Final Project proposal **approved** by the Graduate Advisor before beginning your Final Project work. Please see the Proposal Guidelines. A faculty advisor may approve the student's proposal in consultation with the Graduate Advisor.
- The student is responsible for knowing and meeting all deadlines and meeting the requirements for an acceptable thesis.
 - If a student has a faculty advisor who will review and approve the paper, then the student and faculty advisor should mutually agree upon deliverables and deadlines.
 - Note: To graduate in a semester, the Final Project must be **approved** no later than the last day of the semester. But since the paper needs to be read and reviewed, students should expect to submit the paper drafts at least 4-6 weeks before the end of the semester.
- The Graduate Advisor and/or the Faculty Advisor will evaluate the Final Project for approval. For evaluation of a Final Project, students should expect to:
 - Submit a draft of their paper to the graduate advisor and/or faculty advisor.
 - Based on comments on the draft, the students will address the comments and complete a final draft.
 - The faculty advisor and/or graduate advisor may require the student to have additional deliverables and deadlines.

Research Paper guidelines

The research paper usually includes the following sections:

I. Introduction

- At the beginning of the introduction, it is recommended to use a “hook” which is a statement or story that would spark the interest of a reader to read the rest of the paper. This can be a highly interesting statistic, quote, or story from your research or it can highlight the important issue that your paper will address.

- Consider writing the introduction after you have completed the rest or most of the paper, because the introduction should lead into your argument and research. If you write the introduction first, often it will end up as a mismatch for your paper as it develops.
- An Introduction should also have:
 - The goal of the paper with research question and the purpose of the research.
 - The research question should be focused enough to answer it with your research methods and within the scope of a semester's work and Final Project-level paper. Your research question should be an original question, which means you should be asking and answering questions NOT already covered and answered in scholarship.
 - Background information about the research question so that readers can understand the context and importance of the research.
 - Acknowledging the theoretical frameworks and/or previous scholarship upon which you are working and building.
 - Describing the scope of your research.
 - Giving a brief overview that previews the reader for the paper's structure and findings.

II. Literature review

- In the literature review section, you should discuss what the existing literature says about your particular topic by analyzing what is known about your topic and also highlighting problems and gaps in the existing knowledge. By doing so, your literature review explains how and why your research question contributes to existing knowledge on your topic. Your literature review should evaluate scholarship with a clear focus and a critical perspective.

III. Research Methods

- This section describes and justifies: how you collected and analyzed the data and evidence:
 - First, describe the method you used and why you used this method.
 - Then, explain every step of the data collection and analysis process. This may include:
 - Describing the population that you studied in your population and why you selected this population for the research.
 - Explaining your rationale and steps for the methods for research (interviews, surveys, focus groups, archives, media stories, etc.).
 - Describing how you analyzed the data that you collected or accessed.
 - Discussing difficulties and challenges in the data collection process.

IV. Report of Results

- This section presents the results from your data analysis. This includes:
 - Tables and/or figures used to show and summarize all numeric data results.
 - For qualitative and historical research, you can organize this data by themes or categories that you found in your research.
 - If you conducted surveys, focus groups, or interviews, you should first provide a brief demographic or descriptive profile of the participants first.
 - You should use direct quotes or paraphrasing from focus groups, interviews, or other methods to support your findings.

V. Discussion of findings and implications for urban studies

- The purpose of this section is to discuss what your data findings mean in relation to the scholarship on your topic and to the field of Urban Affairs. Basically, this section describes why what you discovered in your data analysis is important and relevant.
- What is your research's practical implications? For example, what do your findings suggest for urban policy and governance?

VI. Conclusion

- This is a short section that restates your research question and summarizes your conclusions.
- The conclusion should also have discussion about the implications of your findings for scholarly literature on this topic and/or for policy.
- Discuss what further questions and research your findings provoke and what were the limitation of your research study.

VII. Optional: Notes, footnotes/endnotes, appendices, etc.

VIII. Bibliography

Research Paper Formatting

- Length: Urban Affairs research papers are expected to be approximately 30-50 pages (1-inch margins, 12-pt font) before the bibliography and any appendices.
- Referencing: The paper should use a formal referencing system that uses in-text citations for references. For example:
 - APA style: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>
 - Chicago: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/717/01/>
 - Harvard style: http://www.isa-sociology.org/publ/sociopedia-isa_harvard-style-guidelines.pdf
 - MLA Style: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>
- All images/figures, charts, and graphs should be formatted according to the referencing system you are using. Thus each image/figure, chart, or graph must have an ID (e.g. Figure 1, Chart 1, etc.) & caption.

Evaluation of the Research Paper for your Final Project

The Final Project research paper will be deemed approvable by the Graduate Advisor and/or Faculty Advisor if the research paper meets the following standards:

- The paper successfully and sufficiently asks and answers a clear research question related to Urban Affairs.
- The paper sufficiently addresses all the required paper sections under the above section **Research Paper Guidelines**.
- The paper's methods and data findings and analysis sufficiently answer the research question.
- The paper addresses an original research question and study.
- The paper adequately addresses relevant scholarship and literature for the topic.
- The paper adequately discusses the implications of its findings to Urban Affairs.

- The paper has a coherent argument and narrative.
- The paper has sufficient use of and proper formatting for in-text referencing, the bibliography, and for figures, graphs, and charts.
- The paper is readable and appropriate in terms of style, grammar, and spelling.