

**The Master's Project:
Guidelines for Completing Research Paper and an Experiential Project
at the Adler Graduate School**

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Introduction

Completion of the Master's Project marks the end of your academic journey at the Adler Graduate School. It is the final stage of your work toward the master's degree. At this final stage, you have achieved not only a general awareness about the helping profession, but a specific set of knowledge about Adlerian psychology. In addition, you are making your first serious steps in using scientific methods in clinical thinking and applying Adlerian ideas to practice. Optimally, the Master's Project demonstrates one of the best qualities of Adlerian psychology – psychology of use.

This publication guides you through the Master's Project, its process and its content. It contains the optimal timeline and other recommendations. These guidelines describe options in completing this three-credit experience, based on your track at the AGS, your special interests, and your developing competencies.

None of the options described in this document is superior or inferior to another, and none is more or less rigorous. The options create choices for you to complete the Master's project rather than alternatives around it. The idea of options encourages you to recognize and to use your personal, academic, and practical strengths in this very important academic exercise. The existence of more than one option in completing the Master's Project is designed exclusively to highlight the richness of voices, talents, and experiences and to incorporate these experiences into the collective wisdom of Adler students and alumni.

With this, you are also encouraged to think whether you may plan on pursuing a doctoral degree in the future, and, thus, explore whether any potential doctoral programs may have specific requirements for a Master's Level final project.

In sum, and unless specific track/program requirements apply, a decision about the type of Masters Project belongs to you. You will make and exercise the decision in consultation with your advisor and under a guidance of your Master's Project Chairperson.

Overview of the Master's Project

Regardless of the option you chose, the Master's Project is an in-depth study of a topic in your area of academic interest and the topic's interface with Adlerian psychology. In consultation with a Master's Project' Chairperson, you select an academic topic of personal interest and/or community significance and examine it through the Adlerian lens. The project is an in-depth investigation of this topic, including the history of the issue, current status, clinical/practical utilization, and future implications.

You are encouraged to identify a topic that appears in current research literature and is subject to analysis through primary sources (i.e., contemporary academic journals). You explore the interaction of a topic with Adlerian psychology. The Master's Project delivers recommendations for both professional practice and future research.

Options for Completing the Master's Project

Generally, there are two types of project. Unless your track has specific requirements, you choose one of these options below.

Option one: research paper.

An in-depth academic investigation (a literature review) of a topic of academic interest related to Adlerian psychology. A well-conceived and well-written research paper is part of your academic portfolio which can be presented to graduate schools (i.e., Ph.D, Psy.D) as a part of your admission materials should you decide to pursue a terminal degree. In addition, the Adler research paper could well lay the foundation for future graduate research such as a doctoral dissertation.

Option two: experiential project.

An in-depth academic and experiential investigation of a topic of community significance, studied in current academic research, and interfaced with Adlerian psychology. For example, you could create a grant proposal, a new community or therapeutic program development plan, a theatrical play, or a book submitted for a publication.

A highlight of such a project is a community-based or professional event (in-service training, conference presentation, play, art exhibit, or other type of presentation determined by a student, his/her committee, and approved by the AGS Academic Vice President). You will create a video of the event. In addition to the presentation, you will write a paper outlining objectives, summary of the project, and recommendations developed based on the project. This summary and recommendations section must be at least 15 pages long, not counting the abstract, reference page, or title page.

Specific track requirements and recommendations.

School Counseling students may choose either the Research paper or the Experiential Project. The Master's project in School Counseling will continue to be two credits plus the one-credit licensure portfolio.

Students pursuing *School Counseling and another track (LMFT, LPC/LPCC)* complete the Master's Project according to the above School Counseling Program requirements. You are encouraged to choose a topic that combines your both interests.

Students pursuing *MCOL and another track (LMFT, LPC/LPCC)* are encouraged to choose a topic that would combine your MCOL and clinical interests.

Art Therapy students have the opportunity of completing either option one (research paper) or option two (experiential project). In addition to the listed approaches and requirements, the Art Therapy students could submit research for publication in a professional journal, present at a national conference, or have a public art exhibition.

General content and process requirements.

In addition to the above options, everyone will have to pass an oral examination. No part of the Master's Project (a conference presentation, in-service training, or other type of presentation) can be used in lieu of the oral examination. During the oral examination, you will experience an in-depth discussion of the topic of your project, its major accomplishments and implications, and personal reflections about what you learned about yourself and approaches to professional practice through the study of Adlerian psychology. This part of the oral examination pulls together the many facets of graduate education and examines how you as a professional have changed and grown.

Please note that regardless of the option you choose, the amount of work involved in completing the Master's Project and the quality of the final product will be representative of three graduate level credits. The Research Paper (option 1 above) contains at least 15 pages of narrative per credit (2 credits = 30 pages, 3 credits = 45 pages). The summary of the Experiential

Project (option 2 above) contains at least 15 pages of narrative. In this section, the minimum number of pages does not include the title page, abstract, references, tables, etc.

All of the Master's Project options above are based on at least 30 sources, at least 75 percent of which are from scholarly peer-reviewed publications. Some of the sources may be acknowledged in a manuscript, Power Point presentation, handouts, proposal, or other Master's Project-related documentation versus being directly referenced in the paper's narrative. In this case, an annotated bibliography is included (in addition to a reference page). In your search for scholarly sources, try to find research conducted within the last five years.

The presentation/teaching/books and other materials will contain a statement about the project being conducted as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master's of Art degree at the AGS.

Phases and Stages of the Master's Project

Timing is important. The following is a time/step-line that will assist you in making the Master's Project experience a success:

1. AGS Courses 500 (Principles of Research) and 600 (Principles of Research for MCOL) should be considered a part of the Master's Project process and, as such, taken as approximately your sixth course.

2. At the end of the course 500 or 600, you produce a preliminary proposal for the Master's Project, identifying the purpose, rationale, and background of the problems, as well as outlining existing research that will later serve as a base for the project.

3. Within a quarter after taking AGS Course 500 or 600, you a) confirm your topic, b) decide on a type of project and c) have a Chairperson who has agreed to work with you. At that time, your Advisor will sign off that you completed tasks a) through c) above.

4. From that point on, your Chairperson becomes the primary contact and the ultimate authority in Master's Project-related tasks: content, structure, and timing.

5. No later than after the 5th quarter at AGS, but still approximately three quarters before your anticipated graduation (whichever is earlier), you select a Reader, have your Chairperson and Reader sign the proposal, and submits your proposal to the Academic Vice President.

6. At least three months before the oral exam is to take place, you submit your first draft to the Chairperson.

7. At least three weeks before your anticipated graduation date, the oral exam is scheduled. You should discuss with your Chairperson the expectations of the oral examination, so you can come prepared.

8. Your Reader should have at least 10 days before the oral exam to review the paper or, in the case of an experiential project, your summary and other materials.

Good planning makes for a much more rewarding and useful process in completing the Master's Project. If you follow and complete all the steps above, conducting the Master's Project and composing the written portion of it can be an enjoyable experience.

Certainly, there are situations where students must revise their timeline to completion. If you feel stuck in the process or are experiencing events in life that may necessitate revisions to the plans, you are encouraged to consult with your Chairperson immediately and get help.

Other Important Items to Consider

Except as described later in these guidelines or as required by a specific type of task, you follow the writing standard set forth in the APA Publication Manual (6th ed.) (2009). For *Ethical Compliance Checklist*, you can refer to the APA Publication Manual (2009, p. 20). This document also contains writing tips (Figure 1).

Originality.

One of the requirements of the APA Publication Manual and an AGS policy is that any work produced by you should be an original work. Although you may choose or be directed by your Chair person to use a knowledgeable consultant to proofread your work for style, grammar, and general flow, *plagiarism (including self-plagiarism) in the Master's Project is not acceptable under any circumstances*. For detailed description of plagiarism and self-plagiarism, see the APA Publication Manual (2009, pp. 15-16).

Protecting human participants.

In an effort to protect human participants, you must follow the AGS policy concerning the use of confidential information. The APA Publication Manual contains a detailed discussion on this matter (2009, pp. 16-17). Additionally, you have to comply with all and any institutional policies on protecting human participants should any data be collected at the agencies or institutions other than the AGS.

Issues concerning intellectual property.

If you use information (tests, tables, figures in their entirety) that are copyrighted, steps must be taken to protect the intellectual property of others, including obtaining necessary copyright permissions.

Making sure an APA expert is scrutinizing work.

The research component of the Master's Project must meet the publication guidelines of the American Psychological Association (2009). Therefore, it is imperative that either (a) you become expert in APA style, (b) your MP Chair is expert in APA style, (c) you use an APA-knowledgeable consultant, or (d) you utilize some combination of a, b, and c. Preferably, your MP Chair is knowledgeable in APA format and can guide you on the details, even though you may have a good working knowledge of APA style.

Choosing a Chairperson and a Reader.

You have one Master's Project Chairperson and one Master's Project Reader. Ideally, your MP Chair is an Adler Graduate School faculty member with whom you feel comfortable, who has similar/compatible research interests, who understands requirements of the APA format, and who expresses readiness to work with you on your Master's Project. The AGS website has a list of faculty who can serve as Chairpersons, with their areas of interests, philosophy, and a description of project types they are willing or able to chair. When selecting the Chairperson, you may consider additional factors, such as the potential Chairperson's preferred mode of communication, general availability for on-going consultations, rules on draft reviews (pages,

sections, or an entire manuscript), and other variables, such as their availability for the specific term when you anticipate having your project finished and presented.

The Reader will assist the Master's Project Chairperson in conducting the oral exam. Although the Reader can be helpful in developing and composing the Master's project, the Master's Project Chairperson is the primary contact and the ultimate authority for your Master's Project work. You are encouraged to select the Reader in consultation with the MP Chairperson and your Program Director.

Final drafts and oral examination.

You discuss with your Chairperson the specifics of the timeline and tasks to accomplish during all stages of the Master's Project process, including specific content and preparedness for the final examination.

The final oral examination takes 90 minutes. Generally, it is composed of two sections: an examination of your knowledge of Adlerian psychology and a discussion of the Master's Project.

Once the final draft is approved and permission is given by the Chairperson to schedule an oral examination, you are responsible for scheduling the oral examination in consultation with the AGS Media Center Coordinator. In turn, the Media Center Coordinator communicates with the MP Chairperson and Reader to arrange the date and time for the oral exam. Using this process allows the Media Center Coordinator to prepare the necessary paperwork and monitor students who are finishing their Master's Projects. It facilitates a better overall sense of how many Adler students are nearing completion of their master's degrees.

Formatting.

The research paper and the summary/recommendation sections of the experiential project should be organized and formatted by levels of headings (see Levels of Headings, APA, 2009, pp. 62-63). Formatting the paper properly makes writing significantly easier and more focused. In preparing the MP for cataloguing, you may choose to include an “acknowledgement page” where you mention people who have been instrumental in helping you complete your final papers and master’s degrees, who assisted in conducting your project or critiquing your manuscript. Explain any relationships that may be seen as a conflict of interest. If any organization involved in your project requires a disclaimer, you have to include a required statement. It is your responsibility to check on whether any disclaimer may be required. Because the title page is always page 1 of a document, the acknowledgement page should be marked as 1a.

Abstract is a necessary element of your Master’s Project. Abstract will help readers of your manuscript to review the contents of your project and to decide whether they want to read the entire project. The APA Publication Manual (2009) list accuracy, nonevaluative stance, coherence and readability, and conciseness as qualities of the good abstract (p. 26).

Another task in preparation of the final manuscript is to create the Table of contents. Table of contents usually follows the abstract and the acknowledgment page and may be a useful component of the Master’s Project.

Cataloguing.

Once the oral examination is completed and the MP Chair and Reader have each signed off on the examination paperwork, you can move to the final step of preparing your materials for cataloguing in the Adler Graduate School Media Center. Upon review by the Media Center

Coordinator, the research paper and/or all the materials created and presented in the course of an experiential project (manuals, audio/video materials, power point presentation, book, booklets, announcements, and other material that is part of the Master's project) are catalogued in the Media Center of the Adler Graduate School. The written parts of the Master's Project and any other parts that can be digitized will be stored electronically. Please consult with your Chairperson and the Media Center Coordinator for details and issues concerning bound copies.

In any case, you have to send at least an electronic copy to the Media Center Coordinator. These bound and electronic copies are the means by which your experience with practicing Adlerian psychology and/or expertise about a specific topic are available to future AGS students and other investigators interested in learning about the subject you studied. The array of research papers housed in the Media Center constitutes a rich exposition of academic interests and expertise developed by matriculating Adler Graduate School students.

Thank you for reading this document carefully and best wishes as you prepare Master's Project.

Recommended MP Completion Timeline

Timeline	Accomplishment	Advisor signs (A)	Chairperson signs (C)
AGS Course 500 or 600 (approximately 6 th course)	Preliminary proposal for the MP, identifying purpose, rationale, background of the problems	_____ Academic Advisor's Signature	
Within a quarter after taking the AGS Course 500 or 600	a) topic is confirmed b) decision on the type of project c) Chairperson agrees to work with the student.		_____ Advisor's Signature
No later than after the 5 th quarter at AGS, but still approximately three quarters before anticipated graduation	a) Reader is selected b) Chairperson and Reader sign a proposal c) Proposal submitted to the Academic Vice President.		_____ Chairperson's Signature
At least three months before the oral exam is scheduled	First draft is submitted to the Chairperson		_____ Chairperson's Signature
At least 10 days before the oral exam	Draft is submitted to the Reader		_____ Chairperson's Signature
At least three weeks before the anticipated graduation date	Oral exam is scheduled and passed		_____ Chairperson's Signature

Figure 1.

Writing Tips: Suggestions for Improving
the Quality of Written Assignments

Critical: Know APA format

You must become knowledgeable about this style of writing. It is the format for written work in all professional disciplines in the behavioral sciences. Study the *APA Manual* carefully as you prepare papers. Do not guess. Stick to the format. The *Manual* contains answers to most questions.

Writing Style

- a) Use headings and subheadings carefully as dictated by APA (2009, pp. 62-63).
- b) As much as possible, separate ideas and concepts using new paragraphs. Avoid long paragraphs containing multiple ideas and concepts.
- c) Use clear and concise paragraphs. Do not create one-sentence paragraphs. Three to five sentences per paragraph is a reasonable guideline. A paragraph longer than one double-spaced page may be too long (APA, 2009, p. 68).
- d) Be mindful about sentence length. Shorter and longer sentences may serve different purpose and will make different impact on readers. Read more on this in the APA Publication Manual (2009, p.68).
- e) Avoid passive voice and be consistent with the tense you choose to use.
- f) Do not make a claim without citing a source.

- g) When using quotes, do so accurately in APA format. Be careful to always include author, publication date, and page or a paragraph number when quoting. Avoid block quotes whenever possible.

Writing Nuances

- a) In sentences, be consistent in use of singular and plural. For example:
- a. “The child’s social interest begins to develop when **he or she is** an infant.”
(correct)
 - b. “The child’s social interest begins to develop when **they are** an infant.”
(incorrect)
- b) Gender is a social construct and does not identify sex. If you intend to identify a person’s psychosexual orientation, use *gender*. If intend to identify a person physiologically, use *sex* rather than *gender*. If you intend to identify a person’s psychological orientation to maleness or femaleness, use “gender” rather than “sex.” (Read more in the APA Publication Manual, 2009, pp. 73-75).
- c) Be sensitive to racial and ethnic identity issues and try to be as specific as possible in the cultural description of individuals. Avoid using the word *minority* without a modifier “ethnic”, “racial”, “sexual”, or “linguistic”. Capitalize racial and ethnic groups (*Black* instead of *black*). (Read more discussion on this topic in the APA Publication Manual, 2009, p. 75-76).
- d) Don’t use language that defines an individual by his or her condition (borderline client, schizophrenic parent). You may want to write about “a client diagnosed with borderline personality disorder” or “parents with diagnosed schizophrenia” (pp. 72-73)

- e) Don't use contractions. Use "does not" instead of "doesn't", "is not" instead of "isn't", etc. It is more formal and appropriate to academic papers.
- f) If this might be helpful, proofread papers out loud to yourself in an audible voice or have someone else to proofread it for you.

These are only a few examples. The APA Publication Manual contains a chapter devoted to writing clearly and concisely (APA, 2009, pp.61-87)

Running head: YOUR PAPER TITLE

The Title of Your Project

A Research Paper

Presented to

The Faculty of the Adler Graduate School

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

the Degree of Master of Arts in

Adlerian Counseling and Psychotherapy

By:

Your Full Name

Month Year

Running head: YOUR PAPER TITLE

The Title of Your Project

A Summary Paper

Presented to

The Faculty of the Adler Graduate School

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

the Degree of Master of Arts in

Adlerian Counseling and Psychotherapy

By:

Your Full Name

Month Year

Approval Process for a Master's Project's Inclusion in AGS Media Center

(Appropriate Forms Available On-Line and in the Media Center)

1. Once approved by a student's Chairperson and Reader, an electronic version of the research paper (option 1 or the School Counseling 2 credit research paper), summary and recommendation portion of the Experiential Project (option 2), and other materials (videotapes, brochures, advertisement, booklets, etc.) are submitted to the AGS Media Center Coordinator for the Media Center archives. Subject to approval by the Media Center Coordinator, some research components will be made available to students and others wishing to make use of those research papers. At the student's discretion, research components approved for public display may also be submitted in hard copy version for display in AGS Media Center.
2. At the end of the oral examination, the Chairperson completes a form regarding the readiness of the Master's Project materials for placement in AGS Media Center.
3. In general, the Chairperson will make one of four judgments about the Project, communicated via form:
 - Master's Project is passed and electronic copy should be given to AGS Media Center Coordinator for archives. The Media Center Coordinator will review the manuscript for public placement in AGS Media Center.

Master's Project is passed and ready for electronic archiving. However, it requires further work if it is to be considered ready for review by Media Center Coordinator for possible, public placement in AGS Media Center. Master's Project materials (research paper, video, audio, powerpoint presentation, flyers, announcements, books and booklets, etc., summary

and recommendations) should be reviewed again by the Chairperson, who will forward revised Master's Project research component to Media Center Coordinator, as appropriate.

- Student passes oral examination, but Master's Project needs a small amount of work if it is to be ready for electronic archiving. These changes must be made and re-submitted to the Chairperson for review and submission to the Media Center for archiving. Additional work is required if the Master's Project is to be considered ready for review by Media Center Coordinator for possible, public placement in AGS Media Center.
 - Master's Project requires further work to be passed and cannot be archived or considered for placement in AGS' Media Center. Student must submit basic-level revisions to Chairperson that are necessary for passing. Chairperson makes decision if student has met criteria for passing and whether the Master's Project can be forwarded to Media Center for archiving. It is possible that the Master's Project is passable after revisions are made, and archive-ready, but the Chairperson continues to believe that additional revisions are necessary before the project is ready for final review by Media Center Coordinator for possible public placement in the Media Center. If these second-level, optional revisions are necessary, and if the student pursues these revisions, the revisions must be approved by the Chairperson if the Master's Project research component is to be forwarded to Media Center Coordinator for final review.
4. A copy of the form completed by the Chairperson is shared with the student at the end of the oral examination.
 5. The original signed form is given to the Media Center Coordinator for the Master's Project research component central file.

6. The Media Center Coordinator only reviews Master's Project that have been deemed by the Chairperson to be ready for both archiving and final review for possible, public placement in the Media Center.
7. Media Center Coordinator reviews Master's Project for possible, public placement in Media Center and makes one of two judgments:
 - Master's Project is approved and placed in Media Center for public display.
 - Master's Project is returned to student for optional final revisions. If public placement is desired by student, revisions must be made to Media Center Coordinator's satisfaction before public placement in Media Center occurs.
8. The Media Center Coordinator completes the final review form and provides a copy to the student and keeps the original for Master's Project central file.
9. Again, all students must submit a final electronic copy of their Master's Project research component and other materials to the Media Center Coordinator, regardless of whether or not it will be formally placed in Media Center. In addition, any student whose Master's Project research component is approved for public placement in the AGS Media Center may, at her/his discretion, also provide the Media Center with a bound copy of her/his Master's Project research component.

October 2009

Human Subjects Research Review Process

(Appropriate Forms Available On-Line and in the Media Center)

- 1) This process applies to Master's Projects
- 2) Student prepares proposal for review by Chairperson, Reader and Academic Vice President (AVP).

If the proposed project includes human subjects and/or raw data concerning human subjects – that is, more than a literature review – the following three areas (steps 3 through 5) must be addressed. If necessary, step 6 will also be executed.

- 3) The process for gathering data/information and type of data/information must be described.
 - a) Data/information gathered through research methods including surveys, interviews, observations
 - b) Data/information gathered from previous research
 - c) Degree of invasiveness in research methods and degree of intimacy of data/information collected
- 4) The following criteria must be adequately addressed.
 - a) Ensure subjects' safety
 - b) Subjects' risks minimal and reasonable relative to subjects' benefits
 - c) Sound research design
 - d) Process for selection of subjects must be defensible
 - e) Informed consent sought and documented, as appropriate
 - f) Adequate plan to monitor data collected

- g) Ensure privacy/confidentiality of data
 - h) Additional safeguards for vulnerable subjects
- 5) Proposed human subjects research must be reviewed and approved by the AVP.
- a) AVP and a student's Chairperson and Reader will independently review proposals
 - b) AVP, Chairperson or Reader may direct applicant to adapt proposal, before approval granted
 - c) AVP must approve final proposal before work with Chairperson and Reader begins
- 6) Based on the review of steps 3 through 5, at the AVP's discretion, the research proposing the use of human subjects may be subject to approval by AGS' Program Directors.

April 2008

CHAIRPERSON REVIEW OF MASTER'S PROJECT – to be completed after oral examination and prior to submission of Master's Project research paper, summary and recommendation portion of the Experiential Project, and other materials (videotapes, brochures, advertisement, booklets, etc.) to AGS Media Center Coordinator for final approval and formal placement in AGS Media Center

Name of Student:

Master's Project Chairperson:

Date:

- I. Appropriate materials assembled for review by AGS Media Center Coordinator for formal placement in AGS Media Center – Materials not suitable for placement eliminated – Yes_____ No_____

Comments:

- II. APA formatting standards followed, when applicable – Yes_____ No_____

Comments:

- III. Ready to put forward to AGS Media Center Coordinator – Yes_____ No_____

Comments:

Signature of Master's Project Chairperson:

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MEDIA CENTER COORDINATOR REVIEW OF RESEARCH PAPER AND/OR OTHER COMPONENTS OF MASTER'S PROJECT – to be completed by Media Center Coordinator after oral examination and approval of Master's Project by student's Master's Project Chairperson, and prior to formal cataloguing in AGS Media Center

Name of Student:

Master's Project Chairperson:

Date:

- I. Appropriate materials assembled for review by AGS Media Center Coordinator for formal cataloguing in AGS Media Center – Materials not suitable for placement eliminated – Yes_____ No_____

Comments:

- II. APA formatting standards followed, when applicable – Yes_____ No_____

Comments:

- III. Ready to be formally catalogued in AGS Media Center – Yes_____ No_____

Comments:

Signature of AGS Media Center Coordinator:

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