

**Alternative to the Comprehensive Exam
The Research Publication Option
(Adopted on November 20, 2016; Revised January 25, 2017)**

I. OVERVIEW

The publication option is an alternative to the Comprehensive Exam and the traditional thesis. The goal of this option is to tie the student's culminating experience in with the School's emphasis on evidence-based practice by analyzing and disseminating research information. The publication option does not require any less work than preparing for the comprehensive exam or undertaking the traditional thesis. **Students will be expected to have earned a 90% or higher in both SW690 and SW610 to be eligible for the option.**

The end outcome of the research publication option will be a high-quality research-driven manuscript written by the student which will be reviewed and found as "acceptable" by Committee members. It is our hope that this option will teach students who are interested in this endeavor how to conduct research and communicate its results clearly and concisely, and increase student research published in peer-reviewed journals.

Except in limited cases, all human subjects research requires university IRB review. Research activities should not begin without approval, whether it is faculty or student research. Even if you think the research is exempt, very low risk, or involves de-identified data, we are finding the best approach is to assume you need IRB approval. Please call the IRB office for guidance at 619-594-6622 or email them at irb@mail.sdsu.edu.

II. COMMITTEE STRUCTURE

The student will identify a Tenured/Tenure Track (T/TT) School of Social Work (SSW) faculty member to serve as Chair (similar to a thesis Chair). Two other Committee members will be identified by the Chair to serve on the Committee and to provide a review of the concept paper and final manuscript. The Committee is to be composed of two T/TT faculty members or, at the Chair's discretion, one member can be a lecturer, content expert, or research scientist from another university or institution, etc. The three Committee members will be referred to as 'The Committee' throughout the remainder of this document.

III. CONCEPT PAPER PACKET

As with the traditional thesis, the Chair will work closely with the student on all aspects of the research publication option. As one of the first steps, the Chair will work with the student to develop a Concept Paper which describes the research idea and plan in enough detail for the additional two Committee members to provide meaningful input. Students will be given materials by their Chair that will help them develop their concept

paper packet. These materials may include sample IRB protocols, journal articles, journal requirements, sample journal feedback, journal review criteria, and examples of acceptance rates.

Once the Chair has approved the Concept Paper Packet, the Chair will pass on the packet to the other two Committee members for input and approval. A Committee Review Form will be used by Committee members to provide feedback to the student, via the Chair (see Appendix A). Once all approvals are obtained, the student may proceed with the research.

The Committee will give feedback to the student (via the Chair) regarding the concept and approach, and the Chair will take primary responsibility to work with the student to incorporate any needed changes.

To adhere to the recommended Timeline in section IV, students are strongly encouraged to conduct a secondary data analysis rather than collect original data, although original data collection is an option.

Students will complete a Concept Paper and Packet describing the proposed study as early as possible in their program. For full-time students this packet would typically be completed in the second semester of the first year or first semester of the second year, or the summer between these two semesters (see suggested Timeline below). Three-year students would typically submit the packet during the second semester of their second year or the first semester of their final year. Advanced standing students should aim to complete the packet early in the first semester (See Appendix B).

The Concept Paper Packet will include:

1. A Cover Sheet that declares this option as the student's requested choice.
2. An identified Chair, with her/his signature on the Cover Sheet.
3. A 5-10 page literature review (reviewing substantive literature published in the last years on the topic including peer-reviewed journal articles and key seminal pieces that are historically relevant).
4. A specific Research Question or hypothesis that is a natural conclusion of the literature reviewed.
5. An identified dataset (or original data collection plan) that will be utilized for analyses to answer the Research Question. Include a brief description of the dataset's sampling approach, data collection procedures, date of data collection, primary variables, etc.
6. A data analysis plan with sufficient level of detail for the Committee to give input.
7. A list of at least 3 target journals that will be potentially used for the submission.
8. Status of an IRB protocol approving the use of human subjects.

IV. TIMELINE

The following are general guidelines and timeline based on a two-year program of study. Students following a one, three, or four year program of study should adjust the timeline accordingly.

Students are encouraged to enroll in SW797 Research (in lieu of SW791 for their Advanced Research requirement or in lieu of one of their two elective requirements) in the Fall semester, and in SW798.3 (3 units) in the Spring semester. The enrollment may be done as an Independent Study and the specific time of enrollment should be determined in conjunction with the guidelines below and the Chair's judgment. The Chair will fulfill the requirements with the student for the SW797 course and will inform the Associate Director (the instructor of record for SW797 and SW798) of the fulfillment of all the requirements by the end of the semester, so that a grade (CR/NC) can be submitted by the Associate Director.

A suggested broad timeline is given below, but the student and Chair should discuss a realistic and specific timeline (A timeline for the ASP students can be seen in Appendix B).

Fall, 1st year: Students will be introduced to the Research Publication Option in the student orientation and in SW690. In SW690, they will also learn how to critically review research literature and will be introduced to the topic of secondary data analysis. Assignments in this class might be geared toward developing a research question for the research publication option.

Spring, 1st year: Students will take SW610. In this class they will learn how to identify variables, create and use datasets, and learn basic statistics -- all needed to help develop and answer a research question.

Summer After 1st Year: During the intervening summer, students will be expected to identify a possible Chair, and working closely with the Chair, put together their Concept Paper Packet. Once the Chair is satisfied with the Concept Paper Packet, she/he will submit the packet to the other two Committee members.

Fall, 2nd year: Students will enroll in SW797* and will use this semester to clean the data, create new variables, conduct data analyses, create tables of data as per journal guidelines, and begin writing. (*For SW797, please have your Chair email the Associate Director, confirming that s/he serves as the Chair. Upon receipt of the confirmation email, the Associate Director will provide students with the necessary registration information.)

Spring, 2nd, year: Students will enroll in SW798.03* (3 units) (Please follow the same instruction as above in SW797 for registration). A full draft of the manuscript will be completed. The Chair and the Committee will approve the manuscript by early March if the student wishes to ensure that she/he remains on track for spring graduation. Once

the Chair's approval is secured, the other two Committee members will have at least two weeks to review the manuscript and make suggestions. **Appendix A presents a review form that should be used by Committee members to communicate their recommendations regarding approval, and provide feedback for the student.** Should revisions be necessary, the student will have one month or until May 1st to make revisions and resubmit the manuscript to the Committee for a second review to ensure that she/he remains on track for spring graduation.

A student must receive a rating of "acceptable" by at least 2 of the 3 Committee members in order to pass this option.

A student may change to the regular Comprehensive Exam Option at any time until they have chosen to submit the paper for a second review. After they decide to submit a second draft to the Committee, they may not "opt out" of the Research Publication Option.

Not following the Timeline may result in a delayed graduation date.

Please see Addendum for a timeline for Advanced Standing students.

V. AFTER APPROVAL OF THE MANUSCRIPT BY THE COMMITTEE

After approval of the manuscript by the Committee, the Chair will create a form for the SSW Associate Director. This form will include: the Chair's name, the other two Committee members' names, the student's name, title of the paper, a statement from the Chair that the Committee has found the manuscript to be acceptable, and a statement of passing of the student. Lastly a copy of the final paper will be submitted with this form for the SSW Associate Director's records.

VI. AUTHORSHIP

The student will be first author on a publication resulting from this Option. The Chair will be second author, and the two other Committee members may also be included. If the student discontinues working on the paper for three months after graduation, the Chair may have the option of moving the paper forward toward publication and taking lead authorship. Authorship shall be discussed at the beginning of this project. An authorship form should be created by the Chair and signed by student and Chair.

Note: Each completed student project under this alternative or the thesis alternative will count as one toward the six needed for 3 WTU release contingent upon available resources.

Submitted by: Susan I. Woodruff. Adopted November 20, 2016; Revised January 25, 2017.

APPENDIX A

School of Social Work Publication Option: Committee Review Form

Manuscript Title:

Committee Member:

Please review the manuscript in the areas listed below, complete the checklist, and make comments to the student.

	Yes	No	NA
1. Interest to field	_____	_____	_____
2. Inherent interest of the problem or topic	_____	_____	_____
2. Clarity of presentation	_____	_____	_____
3. Clear statement of purpose	_____	_____	_____
4. Appropriateness of research design (e.g. sample selection/size, survey instrument)	_____	_____	_____
5. Accuracy of data analysis	_____	_____	_____
6. Important results highlighted	_____	_____	_____
7. Adequate use of references	_____	_____	_____
8. Useful tables and figures	_____	_____	_____
9. Conclusions supported by findings in paper	_____	_____	_____

YOUR RECOMMENDATION:

____ Acceptable as is.

____ Revise and ____ re-review OR ____ do not re-review for reasons noted in comments to authors

COMMENTS TO STUDENT

APPENDIX B

Timeline for Advanced Standing Program (ASP) Students

Summer, 1st Year: Students will be introduced to the Research Publication Option in the student orientation. Students will take SW610. In this class they will learn how to identify variables, create and use datasets, and learn basic statistics -- all needed to help develop and answer a research question. Students will be expected to identify a possible Chair and put together their Concept Paper Packet. With the concurrence of the Chair, this is a good time to submit the packet to the other two committee members.

Fall, 1st Year: Students will enroll in SW797* and will use this semester to clean the data, create new variables, conduct data analyses, create tables of data as per journal guidelines, and begin writing. (*For SW797, please have your Chair email the Associate Director, confirming that s/he serves as the Chair. Upon receipt of the confirmation email, the Associate Director will provide students with the necessary registration information.)

Spring, 1st Year: Students enroll in SW798.03* (3 units) (Please follow the same instruction as above in SW797 for registration). A full draft of the manuscript will be completed. The Chair and the committee will approve the manuscript by early March if the student wishes to ensure that she/he remains on track for spring graduation. Once the Chair's approval is secured, the other two committee members will have at least two weeks to review the manuscript and make suggestions. **Appendix A presents a review form that should be used by Committee members to communicate their recommendations regarding approval, and provide feedback for the student.** Should revisions be necessary, the student will have one month or until May 1st to make revisions and resubmit the manuscript to the Committee for a second review to ensure that he/she remains on track for spring graduation.

A student must receive a rating of "acceptable" by at least 2 of the 3 Committee members in order to pass this option.